COLORADO MOUNTAIN COLLEGE
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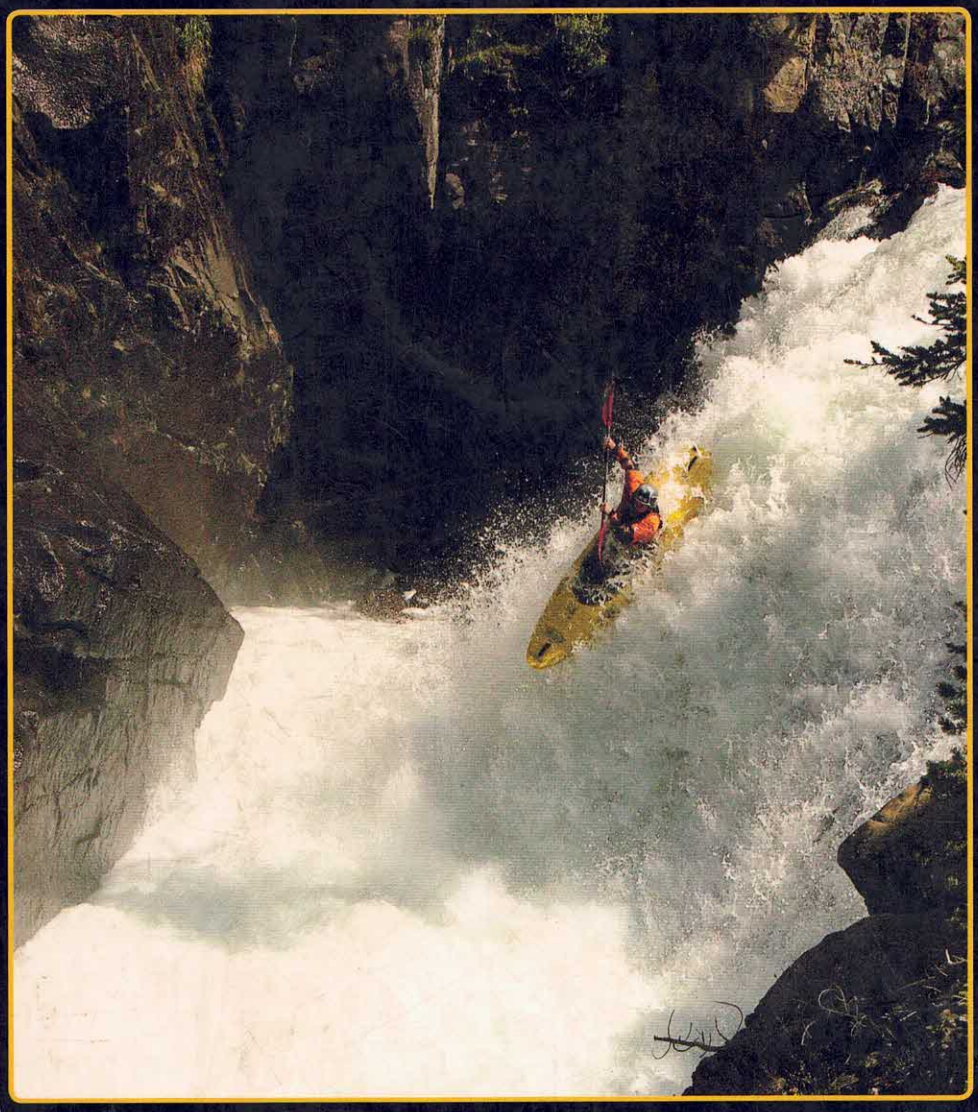
WHITEWATER OF THE SOUTHERN ROCKIES



The New Testament to class I-V+ in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Wyoming.

Stafford | McCutchen

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Kayaking, rafting and river running are dangerous sports that can result in death, paralysis or serious injury. Read and understand this warning before using this book.

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Table of Contents

	Put-In	
★	**Foreword**	8
★	**Instruction Manual**	10
★	**Contributor Pages**	13
★	**Contributor Collage**	14
	Arizona	22
☐	Gila Middle Box	24
☐	Gila Wilderness Run	24
☐	Gila Lower Box	26
☐	Salt River	28
☐	Christopher Creek	32
☐	Upper Tonto	36
☐	Tonto Hellsgate	38
☐	Tonto Box Canyon	38
☐	East Verde Park & Huck	40
☐	East Verde Doll Baby	40
☐	East Verde Wilderness Run	42
☐	Fossil Creek	42
☐	Verde Beasley Flats	44
☐	Verde Wilderness	44
☐	Aqua Fria	46
☐	Oak Creek Indian Gardens	48
☐	Oak Creek Slide Rock	48
☐	Oak Creek Sedona to Red Rock	50
☐	Oak Creek Dry Creek to Cornville	50
☐	Santa Maria Upper Box	52
☐	Santa Maria Lower Box	52
☐	Grand Canyon	56
	Arkansas Drainage	60
☐	Lake Creek	62
☐	Clear Creek Ark	66
☐	Pine Creek	68
☐	Numbers	70
☐	BV Park	72
☐	Fractions	72
☐	BV Lower Town	74
☐	Milk Run	74
☐	Browns Canyon	76
☐	Grape Creek	78
☐	NF South Arkansas	78
☐	Salida Park	80
☐	Salida to Pinnacle Rock	82
☐	Rincon Squirt	82
☐	Pinnacle Rock	82
☐	Royal Gorge	84
☐	Pueblo Park	86
	Bighorn Mountains	88
☐	Clear Creek Canyon	90
☐	Clear Creek Mosier Gulch	92
☐	Clear Creek Town	92
☐	Tongue River	96
☐	Shell Creek	96
☐	Paint Rock Creek	98
☐	Tensleep	98
	Cache La Poudre	100
☐	Upper NF Poudre	102
☐	Lower NF Poudre	102
☐	Filter Plant	104
☐	Bridges Take-Out Wave	104
☐	Ultimate Squirt Spot	104
☐	Bridges	106
☐	Lower Mishawaka	106
☐	Poudre Park	106
☐	Upper Mishawaka	106
☐	Lower Narrows	108
☐	Middle Narrows	108
☐	Upper Narrows	108
☐	Buckhorn Creek	110
☐	Little SF Poudre	110
☐	Upper Rustic	112
☐	Lower Rustic	112
☐	Spencer Heights	118
☐	Joe Wright	120
☐	Big South	122
	Central Mountains	126
☐	Upper Ruby Fork	128
☐	Middle Ruby Fork	128
☐	Lower Ruby & Dark Canyon	128
☐	Oh Be Joyful	130
☐	Slate River	132
☐	Daisy Creek	134
☐	NF Slate	134
☐	Upper East	136
☐	Taylor Canyon	138
☐	Lower Taylor	138
☐	North Bridge to Gunnison Park	140
☐	Gunnison Park	140
☐	Gunnison Park to McCabes Lane	140
☐	Lake Fork Canyon	142
☐	Lake Fork Gate to Red Bridge	142
☐	Lake Fork Box	142
☐	Lake City Town	142
☐	Cebolla Creek	144
☐	Henson Creek	144
☐	Cinnamon Gorge	146
☐	Cottonwood Creek	146

Table of Contents

	Clarks Fork Yellowstone	**148**
☐	Stix and Stones	150
☐	Day Stretch	152
☐	Honeymoon	152
☐	Crandall Creek	154
☐	Grinell Creek	154
☐	Sunlight	154
☐	The Box	156
☐	Lower Clarks Fork	164
☐	Little Rock Creek	164
☐	Shoshone River	166
☐	Lower Shoshone	166
☐	Deer Creek	170
☐	Cabin Creek	170
☐	Main SF Shoshone	170
	Crystal River	**172**
☐	Avalanche Down	174
☐	Catherine Store Roaring Fork	174
☐	Narrows	176
☐	Meatgrinder	176
☐	Bogan Canyon	178
☐	Lower Bogan	178
☐	Yule Creek	180
☐	Crystal Gorge	184
☐	Crystal Mill Falls	190
☐	South Fork Crystal	190
☐	North Fork Crystal	192
☐	Upper Yule	196
☐	Muddy Creek NF Gunnison	196
	Dolores River	**198**
☐	Rico Falls	200
☐	Stoner Stampede	200
☐	Upper Dolores Bonus Action	200
☐	San Miguel Keystone Canyon	202
☐	San Miguel Sawpit	202
☐	Norwood Canyon	202
☐	Ledges	202
☐	Dolores Canyon	204
☐	Slickrock Canyon	204
☐	Gateway	208
	Durango	**210**
☐	Los Pinos	212
☐	Vallecito Creek	214
☐	Falls Creek	218
☐	Miller Creek	218
☐	La Plata Falls	218
☐	Bakers Bridge to 32nd Street Park	220
☐	32nd Street to Smelter	220
☐	Smelter Park	222
☐	Santa Rita & Big Kahuna	222
☐	Farmington WWP	224
☐	Pandora's Box	226
☐	Upper Animas	228
☐	Rockwood Box	228
★	Tacoma Gauge	230
☐	Needle Creek	232
☐	Canyon Creek	232
☐	Cascade Creek	236
☐	Cascade Creek Slot	238
☐	Hermosa Creek	238
☐	2nd Gorge Lime	240
☐	1st Gorge Lime	242
☐	Silverton Daily	244
☐	Eureka to Howardsville	244
☐	Cement Creek	244
☐	Lower South Mineral	244
☐	South Mineral Creek	246
	East Utah	**248**
☐	Yampa Canyon	250
☐	Gates of Lodore	252
☐	White River Floats	254
☐	Upper South White	254
☐	Desolation Canyon	256
☐	Green River Daily	256
☐	Price River	256
☐	Westwater Canyon	258
☐	Cisco to Hittle Bottom	262
☐	Moab Daily	262
☐	Labyrinth	262
☐	Cataract Canyon	264
☐	Escalante River	268
☐	Lower San Juan	270
	Front Range	**272**
☐	Eldorado Canyon	274
☐	Lower South Boulder	276
☐	Upper South Boulder	278
☐	Alto Alto	280
☐	Boulder Park & Town	282
☐	Lower Boulder Canyon	282
☐	Dream Canyon	284
☐	Middle Boulder Canyon	284
☐	Upper Boulder Canyon	284
☐	Upper Upper Boulder Canyon	284
☐	The Source	286
☐	Jasper Creek	288
☐	South Saint Vrain	290

- ☐ Lyons Town & Park 292
- ☐ NSV Apple Valley 292
- ☐ NSV Shelbys Cottages 294
- ☐ NSV Proving Grounds 294
- ☐ Left Hand Creek 294
- ☐ North Saint Vrain 296
- ☐ Big Thompson 300
- ☐ Lower Big Thompson 300
- ☐ Rocky Mountain National Park 304
- ☐ Estes Park WWP 304
- ☐ Little Tommy 304

Greater Denver 306

- ☐ Deckers 308
- ☐ Foxton 308
- ☐ Waterton 310
- ☐ SF South Platte Below Cheesman 310
- ☐ Bailey Canyon 314
- ☐ Cheeseman Canyon 316
- ☐ Eleven-Mile Canyon 316
- ☐ Bear Creek 318
- ☐ Turkey Creek 318
- ☐ Union WWP 320
- ☐ Santa Fe & Mississippi Park & Play 320
- ☐ South Denver Beginner Float 320
- ☐ Confluence Park 322
- ☐ Golden Park 322
- ☐ Lower Clear Creek 326
- ☐ Upper Clear Creek 328
- ☐ Black Rock 328
- ☐ Lawson Hole 330
- ☐ Dumont 330
- ☐ Idaho Springs to Kermits 330
- ☐ West Fork Clear Creek 332
- ☐ Silverplume 334
- ☐ Woods Creek 334

Headwaters of the Colorado 336

- ☐ Upper Tenmile Creek 338
- ☐ Middle Down Tenmile Creek 338
- ☐ Afternoon Adventure Tenmile Creek 338
- ☐ Blue River Source 340
- ☐ Breckenridge Park 340
- ☐ The White Stripe 340
- ☐ Keystone Lifty and Ski Patroller Special 342
- ☐ Upper Blue 342
- ☐ Green Mountain Canyon 344
- ☐ Byers Canyon 344
- ☐ Fraser Canyon 344
- ☐ Gore Canyon 346
- ☐ Pumphouse 350
- ☐ State Bridge to Burns 350
- ☐ Burns to Sweetwater 352
- ☐ Dotsero 352
- ☐ Rock Creek 354
- ☐ Sweetwater Creek 354
- ☐ Piney River 354
- ☐ Alkali Creek 354
- ☐ Homestake Creek 356
- ☐ Eagle Source 356
- ☐ Gilman Gorge 358
- ☐ Cross Creek 360
- ☐ Hidden Falls 360
- ☐ Vail Pass Black Gore 364
- ☐ Fish Ladders & Black Gore Gorge 364
- ☐ Upper Upper Gore Creek 366
- ☐ Upper Gore Creek 366
- ☐ Vail Park 366
- ☐ Lower Gore Creek 366
- ☐ Minturn Slalom Course 368
- ☐ Dowd Chute 368
- ☐ Upper Eagle 370
- ☐ Lower Eagle 370
- ☐ Barrel Springs 372
- ☐ Glenwood Canyon Shoshone 372
- ☐ Glenwood Canyon Grizzly 372
- ☐ Grizzly Creek 372
- ☐ Roaring Fork Cemetery 376
- ☐ South Canyon 376
- ☐ Two Rivers Park Down 376

I-80 WY 378

- ☐ Green River Park 380

Jackson Hole 382

- ☐ Snake River Yellowstone Boundry 384
- ☐ Snake River Grand Teton NP 384
- ☐ Snake River Moose Visitor Center 386
- ☐ Snake River Wilson Bridge 386
- ☐ Snake River South Park Bridge 386
- ☐ Snake River Ranch to East Table 388
- ☐ Alpine Canyon 388
- ☐ Kings Wave 390
- ☐ Station Creek 390
- ☐ Burrito & Taco 390
- ☐ Big Kahuna & Lunch Counter 392
- ☐ Big Friendly Giant 392
- ☐ Hoback River 394
- ☐ Upper Greys River 396
- ☐ Greys River 396

Table of Contents

- ☐ McCoy Creek 396
- ☐ Granite Creek 398
- ☐ Upper Granite Creek 398
- ☐ Gros Ventre 400
- ☐ Crystal Creek 400
- ☐ Blackrock Creek 402
- ☐ South Fork Buffalo 402
- ☐ Upper South Fork Buffalo 402
- ☐ Teton River 406
- ☐ Bitch Creek 408
- ☐ Falls River 408
- ☐ Henrys Fork 410
- ☐ Lower Mesa Falls 410
- ☐ Teton Creek 410

New Mexico 412

- ☐ Upper Chama Canyon 414
- ☐ Chama Wilderness 414
- ☐ Chama Day Stretch 414
- ☐ Rio Brazos 416
- ☐ Upper Taos Box 422
- ☐ Toltec Gorge 424
- ☐ Red River 424
- ☐ Lower Taos Box 426
- ☐ Pilar 426
- ☐ Rio Pueblo 428
- ☐ Rio Embudo 430
- ☐ Santa Cruz 434
- ☐ Guadalupe 434
- ☐ Rio de los Trampas 434

North Platte 436

- ☐ Roaring Fork 438
- ☐ Encampment River 440
- ☐ Northgate Canyon 442
- ☐ Bluegrass creek 444
- ☐ Casper WWP 446

North Utah 448

- ☐ Blackfoot River 450
- ☐ Black Canyon Bear River 450
- ☐ Logan Ricks Springs 452
- ☐ Logan Staircase 452
- ☐ Logan Third to Second Dam 452
- ☐ Lower Logan 452
- ☐ Ogden River 454
- ☐ Ogden Park 454
- ☐ Riverdale Wave 454
- ☐ Big Cottonwood Creek Storm Mountain 456
- ☐ Big Cottonwood Creek Catch Pond 456
- ☐ Little Cottonwood Canyon Hellgate 456
- ☐ Little Cottonwood Heights 456
- ☐ Sixth Water Creek 458
- ☐ Upper Provo Falls 460
- ☐ Upper Provo Slate Gorge 462
- ☐ Lower Slate Gorge 462
- ☐ North Fork Duchesne Source 464
- ☐ Cataract Gorge NF Duchesne 464
- ☐ Little Deer Creek 466
- ☐ East Fork NF Duchesne 466
- ☐ Uinta River 468
- ☐ Lake Fork River 468

Pagosa Zone 470

- ☐ Treasure Canyon 472
- ☐ Conejos Pinnacle Gorge 474
- ☐ Lower SF Rio Grande 474
- ☐ Wagon Wheel Gap 474
- ☐ Upper Rio Grande 474
- ☐ South Fork Rio Grande 476
- ☐ Upper East Fork San Juan 478
- ☐ Wolf Creek 478
- ☐ West Fork San Juan 480
- ☐ East Fork San Juan 484
- ☐ Pagosa Springs WWP & Town 484
- ☐ Mesa Canyon 484
- ☐ Piedra River 486

Roaring Fork 488

- ☐ Castle Creek 490
- ☐ Upper Roaring Fork 490
- ☐ Roaring Fork Grottos 492
- ☐ Slaughterhouse 494
- ☐ Upper Woody Creek 496
- ☐ Lower Woody Creek 496
- ☐ Toothache 496
- ☐ North Fork Fryingpan 498
- ☐ Upper Fryingpan 498
- ☐ Lower Fryingpan 498
- ☐ Fryingpan's Lime Creek 500

San Rafael Swell 502

- ☐ Muddy Creek 504
- ☐ Fremont 504
- ☐ Black Boxes 506
- ☐ Little Grand Canyon San Rafael 508
- ☐ Straight Canyon 510
- ☐ Left Fork Huntington 512
- ☐ Huntington 512

Virgin River 514

- ☐ Zion Narrows 516
- ☐ Temple of Sinawava 520

- ☐ Virgin River Gorge 520
- ☐ Timpoweap Canyon 522

Western Slope 524

- ☐ Big Cimarron 526
- ☐ Lower Cimarron 526
- ☐ Black Canyon 528
- ☐ Gunnison Gorge 536
- ☐ Uncompahgre Qualtiy Quickie 538
- ☐ Uncompahgre Southside 538
- ☐ Uncompahgre Box 538
- ☐ M-Wave 540
- ☐ Fluffy Muffin 542
- ☐ Ridgway Park 542
- ☐ North Fork Gunnison 544
- ☐ Smith Fork 544
- ☐ Paonia Dam 544
- ☐ Escalante Creek 546
- ☐ Lower Gunnison 550
- ☐ GJ Town 550
- ☐ Loma Ruby Horsethief 550
- ☐ 5th Street Wave 552
- ☐ Silo Hole 552
- ☐ Lucky 7 554
- ☐ Big Sur 556
- ☐ Plauteau Creek 558
- ☐ Kannah Creek 560
- ☐ Glade Park Potholes 560
- ☐ Buzzard Creek 560

Wind River Range 562

- ☐ Popo Agie Falls Run 564
- ☐ Popo Agie Sinks Run 564
- ☐ North Fork Popo Agie 566
- ☐ Bull Lake Creek 568
- ☐ Warm Springs Creek 578
- ☐ New Fork 578
- ☐ Wind River Bonus 580

Yampa Drainage 582

- ☐ Upper Fish Creek 584
- ☐ Lower Fish Creek 584
- ☐ North Fork Fish Creek 586
- ☐ Steamboat Town 588
- ☐ Steamboat WWP 588
- ☐ Upper Elk River 590
- ☐ Lower Elk River 590
- ☐ Mad Creek 592
- ☐ Willow Creek 592
- ☐ Slater Creek 594
- ☐ King Solomon 596
- ☐ Middle Fork Little Snake 596
- ☐ Upper Elkhead River 598
- ☐ Cross Mountain Gorge 600

Stories

- ★ Dedication 93
- ★ Pete's Five Lessons of Creek Boating 114
- ★ 9 to 5 on the Box 162
- ★ Getting the Beatdown in the Crystal Gorge 188
- ★ American Whitewater 277
- ★ A River Ran Through It 311
- ★ Subterranean Swimming 420
- ★ I have a secret... 447
- ★ Our Ultimate Shutdown 459
- ★ Legend of Bikini Creek 482
- ★ Babes on Bailey 493
- ★ Redemption and Pain 532
- ★ Feeling the presence of God, in a kayak 555
- ★ Ice Cream Rules 587

Advertisers

- ★ Funhog Press 39
- ★ CKS 75
- ★ American Whitewater 79
- ★ Lendal Paddles 111
- ★ RMA 113
- ★ Snap Dragon Design 143
- ★ Pyranha 163
- ★ Core Mountain Sports 165
- ★ Larabar 179
- ★ Four Corners River Sports 219
- ★ Four Corners Whitewater 235
- ★ Lunch Video Magazine 281
- ★ Renaissance Adventure Guides 319
- ★ Small World Adventures 321
- ★ Confluence Kayak 327
- ★ Dagger 345
- ★ Alpine Quest Sports 353
- ★ Glenwood Canyon Kayak 371
- ★ Rendezvous River Sports 387
- ★ Jackson Kayak 409
- ★ Montana Surf 469
- ★ Liquid Logic Kayaks 475
- ★ Pikes Peak Whitewater Club 485
- ★ Sweet Helmets 545

Take-Out

- ★ Glossary & Abbreviations 602
- ★ Run Difficulty by Chapter 604
- ★ Quality by Run Difficulty 608
- ★ Regional Maps 612

Foreword

One of the best gifts I ever received was my first kayak. The year was 1990 and it was a brand new green Dancer. I paddled almost every day that first season, and from that time on I was driven to explore new rivers.

My first taste of hard whitewater was the following year on the Upper Animas and as the nineties progressed, boats got shorter and the rivers kept getting steeper. When we paddled the Falls Run on the Middle Popo Agie, I looked at the river careening down the mountainside and thought, 'there is no way we are going to run that.' An hour later we were doing it.

It was fun to constantly explore and to be a part of redefining the limits, and it is just as fun today to watch those who continue to challenge what is possible. Whitewater of the Southern Rockies exemplifies this progression of river running as it reaches higher than before to show fresh possibilities for new adventures, all while showcasing and paying tribute to the classic runs that are still enjoyed by river runners of all abilities.

When approached about this book I was immediately impressed by the scope of the project and the time that Kyle and Evan have taken both in paddling and documenting what they had done. This book encompasses a vast area and the authors went beyond their own efforts and wisely enlisted the expertise of local paddlers whenever possible. This gives you the very best beta from those closest to the source and most passionate about the area they are describing.

Reading these descriptions inspires me to go experience new runs, and Whitewater of the Southern Rockies is intended to inspire people to explore. River exploration is not just about first descents or just something for expert boaters. Paddling a new stretch of river or playing at a different spot is always about exploring. Evan and Kyle have kindly carried forward this spirit, as rarely in this book will you be told where to go once afloat.

As river runners from all regions continue to explore and create new definitions of what are actually navigable waterways, conflicts with landowners have occurred. We all know private property rights are sacred in the West, and part of what our country is based on. While it is important that we respect these rights, it is rare in the rest of the world that river access can be denied. While wanton trespassing is unacceptable, we as river runners need to work together with landowners and our state or local government to find solutions to access issues, as there is no doubt in my mind that rivers should be open to and enjoyed by all.

All the rivers of the Southern Rockies are an amazing resource and as boaters we are privileged to enjoy them from a unique perspective. Please don't take these or any rivers for granted. Get involved. Support your local and national river organizations; tread lightly and please strive to set a good example as we are all ambassadors of our sport.

Regardless of your experience, or your river running ability, as you continue to read this book you are beginning an adventure. There is not a person alive who has explored every river or creek listed here, but it will be a noble effort to try. In light of that, I trust you will enjoy using this book as much as I will. Thanks to Evan and Kyle for putting it all together.

Now—let's do this.

-Aaron Pruzan

This is a guidebook, and to us guidebooks have always been an inspiration to embark upon an adventure. To load up the boats, leave your local drainage and wander out into the wilderness that we are so fortunate to be surrounded by in the Southern Rockies. This is our homage to the boof, the blast and the blunt. The ferry, the flip-turn and the forward stroke. The desert float, the steep creek and the box canyon. If you don't know what these things are—don't worry, you will.

This guidebook will take you on a colorful journey through what our region has to offer. Our criteria for including runs was simple—any run that was within a drive through the night of our front doorstep was considered. Only class II runs and below of scenic and/or educational value were included. Any runs class III and above that we had knowledge of being run, with the participants willing to run it a second time, were included. Some runs included have only seen one descent but more are probably in the works. Of course, many of the runs included have seen hundreds of thousands, if not millions of descents.

Guidebook History

"If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants." -Isaac Newton

Kayaking in the Southern Rockies would not be as popular as it is today without the esteemed line of guidebooks that have come before us. The authors themselves certainly would not have found many of the classic runs that have blurred the line between river and temple without the help of the pioneers who took the time to document their adventures. Of particular note are Gordon Banks and Dave Eckardt, who wrote the first and second editions of Colorado Rivers and Creeks (CRC). They set the bar very high and the inspiration they provided was instrumental in our development as kayakers, and as people. They influenced everything, from the way we talk about rivers to the way we run certain rapids. They defined what a hard man was, and they did it with literary style.

How many times have we been in the truck, nervous as hell on some bone-jarring 4WD road on the way to a new run, when CRCII would pop off the dashboard and land in one of our laps? Opening it to the run we were most certainly embarking on in the near future, little things would start to jump off the page. Namely, a bunch of hairy spiders encouraging us to "trust our intuition." The more spiders the worse the butterflies. These guys were the masters of giving you just enough beta to be scared. They intended to preserve the adventure and that is our intent as well.

While doing research for this book we came across Rivers of the Southwest: A Boaters' Guide to the Rivers of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona by Fletcher Anderson and Ann Hopkinson. This guidebook was published when we were both too young to paddle, but after a thorough reading it became apparent that it was quite possibly the inspiration for the CRC adventures.

Rivers of the Southwest was revolutionary for its time, but was eclipsed by the sheer quantity and difficulty of the runs covered in CRC. Pivotal changes in equipment, safety and attitude had taken place in the period between the books, and the newer version offered the most contemporary view of kayaking to date. We humbly hope our guide can take that torch and bear it to the next generation of paddlers.

Region

The Southern Rocky Mountains is a term that must be defined, considering the scope of our book and the multitude of opinions as to where the Southern Rockies actually are. Ten inhabitants of the region, given a map and a crayon would certainly draw the borders of this region to include vastly different areas. We define our Southern Rockies as the mountain ranges found in the states of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. We chose these states for many reasons, not the least being the quality of their paddling and their proximity to where we live.

As a geographic area, the Rocky Mountains span a stretch more than 3000 miles long, from the northernmost reaches of British Columbia, in Canada, to the irrigated farmlands of New Mexico. By simply dividing this enormous range into north and south halves we found our main justification for naming the area the Southern Rockies. Everything included is below the north-south boundary line.

Some of the regions covered aren't really even in a mountain range—but who cares when there's whitewater there! Specifically, parts of Utah and Arizona are covered not so much for their true geographic membership of the Southern Rockies, but more for their quality whitewater opportunities and also for the limited existing beta about them.

Using Colorado as a hub you can reach anywhere in our Southern Rockies by car in a single-day trip. That doesn't mean you can boat that same day, but if you drive through the night you'll get there. Of course, there are runs and/or regions within a single day's drive of Colorado that we did not cover. These were omitted either because they are already well documented, they are of sub-standard quality and/or we simply could not get the beta.

Chapter

In a break from tradition we've organized our chapters in a few different ways. Division of river sections has and continues to be predominately divided by drainage, but we've also grouped runs into chapters by driving patterns, destination cities, mountain ranges, and overall character

and style of the river corridors described. Even though Tenmile Creek and the Grand Canyon share a drainage, they have little in common to justify grouping them. Conversely, the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers in Grand Junction, Colorado should be documented in the same chapter. We believe that this will make for less page flipping when you find yourself at the summit of a highway pass crossing the Continental Divide—and will make for easier weekend destination planning.

Maps

Each chapter has a corresponding map in the map section starting on page 612. These will help you when driving to the put-ins and take-outs described in the directions text. A DeLORME Gazetteer to the state you are visiting is highly recommended. There are no detailed maps of river sections; we hope this will preserve the spirit of adventure, and is in keeping with our belief that kayakers should practice the skills of reading topo maps and the river for themselves. A map of the entire southern Rockies is found on the inside of the covers. A legend is on the back cover flap.

Beta Boxes

There are two sizes of beta box. Runs with a wide range of runnable flows, that are run often and for which there are not too many runs under the same gauge, usually have a large beta box. Other runs have smaller beta boxes where only the essential beta is included. As a rule of thumb the more classic a section of river is, the more likely it is to have a large beta box. The information in the beta boxes is described below.

CFS: A range of flows in cubic feet per second (cfs) that a run can be paddled IN OUR OPINION. Large beta boxes list a minimum through high flow. Smaller beta boxes present useful flow information in a more concise manner.

Minimum: The lowest possible cfs to make a run.

Low: The beginning of the low-but-reasonable range of flows for river running.

Medium: The beginning of the middle range of flows and in general represents the optimal flow.

High: The beginning of the high end of the flow spectrum and usually where the run takes on high-water characteristics such as monster waves and/or holes, a lack of eddies and an overall faster feel. The high cfs by no means represents the highest possible flow that the stretch can be paddled—we leave that up to you.

Character: A bit of useless or possibly useful information. Always subjective and sometimes total nonsense.

Class: The rating for the run on the international scale of river difficulty—class I-V+, for each of the corresponding flow levels, minimum-high. To further differentiate the rating scale, we use plus (+) and minus (-) symbols to express noticeable differences in the level of difficulty. They do not express the difference in risk, or the different skill sets needed to negotiate different types of whitewater. A roadside run takes much less commitment than a remote multi-day run, and a big water section will require a different skill set than a technical, low-volume creek.

If a run has a few rapids, or even a single rapid, with a noticeably higher level of difficulty than the rest of the run, it is marked in parenthesis, for example:

Class III (IV): Suitable for a class III paddler willing to portage. Only one rapid is of class IV difficulty.

Class IV+ (Vs): Suitable for a class IV paddler able to recognize and portage multiple class V rapids.

Class V (V+, P, NR): Suitable for a class V paddler willing to portage one V+ rapid, expecting to portage one P rapid, and planning to portage one NR rapid.

A word of caution. Ratings are highly subjective. To get a feel for our rating system it is recommended to start on an easier class of whitewater than you are comfortable with. Don't assume that our ratings are consistent with other ratings that you are familiar with.

Class I: Moving water with a few ripples and small waves. Few or no obstructions, and large eddies or pools. [I, I+]

Class II: Easy rapids with small waves, easily avoidable holes, and multiple clear routes that are obvious without scouting. [II, II+]

Class III: Rapids with high irregular waves, avoidable large holes and obstructions, and narrow passages. The whitewater is large enough to create high-quality freestyle features. [III-, III, III+]

Class IV: Intense and powerful but predictable rapids. Depending on the character of river, large unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages with strong currents are present. The most difficult regularly paddled freestyle features are contained in this class. [IV-, IV, IV+]

Class V: Violent rapids with large unavoidable holes, steep congested chutes and/or tall vertical drops, all with extremely powerful currents. Rapids may continue for long distances between pools, and what eddies exist may be small and/or turbulent. This is the most difficult, regularly run whitewater. [V-, V, V+]

NR: Not Recommended. A NR symbol represents rapids or sections that we would "not recommend." Many of these rapids or sections (but not all), have been paddled and may be paddled again by experts on a good day with the wind blowing in a favorable direction. If in doubt, assume this is a portage. [NR]

P: Portage. Considered unrunnable based on current river

running technology, and the limits of the human body. Entire runs and wood will never be marked as a P, only individual rapids or sets of rapids. Sometimes even these have been run but the results were generally less impressive than rapids or sections designated as NR. [P]

Quality: Our totally subjective rating of the quality of the run. One through five stars, where a five star run is of the highest quality and where a one star run is in most situations not worth the money in gas to drive the shuttle. Anything three stars and above is generally worth making a prolonged drive for.

Gradient: Usually the average gradient in feet per mile (fpm) for the run. Other times, the gradient is given for the section of the run where most of the rapids (i.e. action or crux) are found. This information can be useful but should be used with caution. For example:

200 fpm: This is the average gradient of the run, and symbolizes a consistent gradient from top to bottom.

200 fpm action: This is the average gradient of the whitewater, and symbolizes that there are significantly mellower sections surrounding the action, i.e. a paddle in or out.

200 fpm crux: This symbolizes that only one short section of a longer run has gradient of 200 fpm. In this circumstance we try to give both the average and the crux gradient—such as 120 fpm, 200 fpm crux.

Remoteness: Our way of giving you an idea about the commitment factor for the run. Runs can be roadside, very far from a road, close to a road but far from help and/or close to a road but deep in an inescapable canyon. A class IV run with a high commitment factor more than likely requires a class V mind set.

Hitchability: How easy it is to bum a ride from a passerby. You can do things to increase your odds. I highly recommend bike shuttles.

Length: The length of the section described in miles.

Season: The most likely months or time of run-off to find the section with enough water to paddle.

Gauge: Name of the gauge associated with the run. A quick internet search using this name will allow you to find real-time flows for the desired stretch (most are USGS). If there is no gauge, this line will read "visual," meaning that you or one of your buddies will have to look at the river in person to determine if it is runnable. Look to the run description for more information. This gauge may also be a "barometer," which means the gauge is far enough away from the actual run as to have possible major discrepancies between the cfs at the run and the gauge.

Put-in, Take-out and River Access: A quick reference name for where the main river access points are or roads that they are on. These may include access points such as roadways, campgrounds, picnic areas, parking lots, and trails. Just because an access point is commonly used does not mean that it is legal. We make no representation about the legitimacy or legality of using any of our described put-in, take-out, and river access points, and furthermore we do not condone trespassing. It is your responsibility to know the boundary lines between public and private property, and to obey the law.

Photo Captions

We've tried to be meticulous about labeling photos, not only to give the photographer credit, but also to provide the subject and location for each photograph. It took one photo in *Whitewater Classics* titled "the secret stash of the southwest" for the authors of this book to take their first cross-country roadtrip to Arizona. Our hope is that the photos in this guide inspire you to pack up the truck, hit the road, and begin an amazing adventure of your own.

Photographer Subject Location

Safety

River running is an inherently dangerous sport. Although there is no way to guarantee your safety on the river, there are precautions you can take to limit the associated risks. They include but are not limited to; having proper equipment, knowing how to use that equipment, being well versed in swiftwater rescue and CPR, paddling within your ability, paddling with a competent team, knowing how to read moving water, and trusting your intuition. If you don't own a throwbag, then trade this book for one. If you have one and don't know how to use it, sell this book and use the money to take a swiftwater rescue course and get CPR certified. This book will not prepare you to navigate any river or creek described. Above all, if something doesn't feel right, get out of the river.

River Stewardship

One of the beauty's of river running is the freedom to pack up the car, drive to the river, and put on without having to pay a fee every time. This freedom is constantly threatened and it is the responsibility of all river users to band together, both with volunteer efforts and money, to protect our rivers. We are the voice of our rivers. Our ability to access public lands, and to float rivers is constantly being threatened. New dams and other threats to the ecological integrity of the rivers we paddle demand our attention. If left unchecked, these issues will destroy the places we love and cherish. Do your part by supporting organizations like American Whitewater (AW), Colorado White Water Association (CWWA), and other non-profits working to protect our interests. Think of your annual membership dues as an affordable season pass to the rivers and creeks that you paddle.

The Southern Rockies paddling community is an amazing group to be a part of. This guidebook is a product of that community—a celebration of the places, experiences and people that together make up the Whitewater of the Southern Rockies. After becoming familiar with this book, it should be obvious that the authors of this book are not just Stafford and McCutchen. A whole slew of paddlers from across the region brought their knowledge and skills together to create this masterpiece before you. This book belongs to us—all of us. The following people directly influenced the outcome of this project. The collage on the ensuing pages brings to life some of our greatest contributors. We owe our deepest gratitude to all of our contributors, large or small. Thank You.

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Chris Smith
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Toni Axelrod/ TevaMountainGames
Tony Czech
Trevor Schatz
Tye Eyden
Tyler Williams
Tyson Titensor
Wendy Knick
Yonton Mehler

Alex Henes

Alex is a super friendly guy. So friendly that he shared his entire catalog of kayaking shots with us for use in this book. He actually led all contributors in the standings with 23 published shots. Every year when we see him at the annual, but highly informal Big Southapalooza, he is smiling with the joy that all paddlers posses when they are about to put on for one of their very favorite stretches. Not one to be confined to his home area, he is out doing what every paddler should—exploring new drainages.

Aaron Mulkey

Aaron is the Cody rep period. Full of smiles, this professional ice-climber wrote the book on ice-climbing in Wyoming. When he turned to paddling he found his first waterfalls by waiting for them to melt after he ascended them the previous winter. His exploration of the creeks in the Shoshone drainages has expanded the creeking opportunities in his home region and his promotion of the Shoshone as a high quality play run with a nearly year round season should bring paddlers from far and wide. Look for a late-season whitewater festival on the Shoshone in the near future, promising to provide paddling in the off-season and a funky good time, compliments of Mulkey. He maintains an open invitation for paddlers to come paddle in the Cody area and his beta on the Bighorns is about all there is left after the passing of his good friend Todd Andrew. He owns Core Mountain Sports and he was even nice enough to let us sleep in the climbing gym while we were on tour. He's certainly improving the quality of life for the youth of the area with a very successful climbing program at his gym. Check out his blog at www.coldfear.com.

Ben Horton

Ben is an amazing fashion and sports photographer and the mere fact that he contributed a stack of photos to this project should bump our credibility factor up a notch. He paddles hard and documents the art of kayaking better than just about anyone we know. His snowboarding skills aren't too shabby either as he is sponsored by GoFast for his big mountain prowess. Check him out at www.benhorton.biz.

Adam & Randy Welch

This father son duo lives and breathes kayaking. Adam's unique and crisp photographs spiced up more than a few chapters and Randy's story about the "old Waterton Canyon" reminds us all what is lost when we let dams destroy our free flowing rivers. Adam is an award winning wedding photojournalist so check out his website at www.adamwelch.net.

Aaron Pruzan

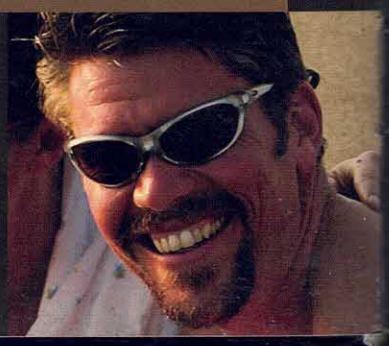
Pruzan is a name that has been spoken highly of among kayak circles for over ten years. He has done wonders for the Jackson Hole scene as he carries the torch for the Kids' Kayak Club, regularly holds kayaking events and works with the Snake River Fund to help preserve the rivers of the area and keep them user fee free. He started instructing and coaching kids in '93 and since then Jackson has essentially grown into one of the major farm clubs for the big leagues of kayaking. Kyle spent a number of summers perfecting his skills through the Jackson Hole Kayak School during his middle school years. With such a dedicated coach it is no wonder that many Kids' Club members have graduated into full fledge expedition paddlers, competitive freestylists or both. Austin Rathman, Evan Ross and Brady Johnston were all part of the program at one time and with that group you may wonder if he brings them up for expedition paddling partners. One of his primary personal interests is exploring the steep creeks of northwestern Wyoming. The Wind River Range has been of particular interest, which he has explored with groups ranging from former students to the original Jackson legends. This knowledge he is now passing on to you to find your own adventure. Aaron has explored rivers throughout the world including exploratory runs in Chile and Russia. One of his greatest personal accomplishments is the completion of the Triple Crown of North America, including the Turnback Canyon of the Alsek at extremely high water levels a la Blackadar, the Devil's Canyon of the Susitna River and the Grand Canyon of the Stikine. He enjoys all facets of the sport from slalom and wildwater to freestyle and wilderness paddling. Pruzan has led a beautifully balanced life as a kayaker, giving back as much as he's received. He still runs Rendezvous River Sports/Jackson Hole Kayak School while trying to kayak, ski and surf as much as possible. He lives in Jackson Hole with his wife Tamsen and kids, Noah and Nathan.

Brad Higinbotham

Probably the hardest man we know, Brad is the guy you pick when you're first captain. He lives on his property in Mancos which for many years sported nothing more than a Tepee. After fulfilling a lifelong dream of being a Hollywood stunt man, he grew tired of L.A and left for a life of river canyons, Weminuche sky-dives and a simple career as a high school teacher and coach. He wrote the description for one of the regions best obscure creek runs, the Cascade Slot and his input regarding the entire San Juans area was invaluable. He also happens to own the cover shot.

Brad Modesitt

Photographer Brad Modesitt has spent much of his time paddling the worlds' rivers. As an infant he learned about his need for rivers, then in 1993 he canoed with his brother from Fort Collins to New Orleans. Now 17,000 river miles later, he is still discovering rivers in the American West and abroad. He is owner of Mountain Whitewater Descents rafting company in Fort Collins, Colorado.



Brian Price

An amazing landscape photographer, Brian was kind enough to donate some brilliant photos from the Gunny Gorge. His photographs of the natural architecture found in the west can keep you occupied through numerous hours of web surfing at work. Check out his website at www.exploreimages.com.

Chris Larsen

It's not everyday that you make introductions and shake hands at the Yule Creek put-in, but that is exactly the story of our first encounter with Mr. Larsen. His beautiful photographs mainly appear in the Western Slope chapter and his new beta on the Big Cimarron take-out will make it a much more enjoyable trip for the serious creek boaters out there.

Brett Hochmuth

Brett was a last minute contributor, who's amazing photographs of the Utah desert floats knocked out a number of shots, which were really quite good themselves. His ability to capture the lifestyle aspect of paddling is nearly unmatched. His photos literally pop off the page and make you dream of leaving your desk job to float the entire Colorado or Green drainages. Check him out at www.eagleeyephotos.com.

Brian Adkins

Brian is a Front Range local who likes to spend his afternoons banging down the wonderful mank which surrounds us in all directions. His description of Woods Creek helped it to make the cut on the Tick List for "Great Canals."

Chris Morrison

Chris sticks lines kayaking like he does corporate accounting –precisely. This Montucky native is always keen to drop the tax checking and get out on the river. He currently resides in Denver.

Brook Aitken

A Front Range hero for quite some time now, Brook used to dominate the local freestyle scene and still would with his flawless style if he entered the rodeos anymore. His freestyle shots are found throughout the Colorado chapters. Check out his father/son film production company LA Productions at www.laproductions.com.

Chris Menges

Chris has been running the shit for years now. Hailing out of Salida, Colorado he's an avid skier and rippin' freestyle and creek paddler. More importantly he's the guy to get on the other end of the CKS order line. As the CKS Squad team manager, he does an awesome job of promoting the sport around the region. Look for him boofing on Lake Creek or throwing down on the Arkansas.

Bryan Owen

Bryan is a Southeast transplant that moved to Gunnison, Colorado for college but more importantly for kayaking. He quickly entered the scene as a retail associate for Three Rivers paddle shop and was a huge volunteer for the original Gunnison Whitewater Festival. He has continued to work in the industry for CKS. The Salida Ranger 420's description of the Montrose Box will help teams navigate the canyon for years to come.

Chris Hofer

Hofer is a sick skier and winter backcountry expert. He owns his own raft and just recently moved out of his van down by the river. His shots of the Dolores tell the story of what was lost when McPhee Dam was built, holding back the rivers annual flood in all but the snowiest of years. If you want to find Hofer, you'll have to track him down in the backcountry somewhere, and when you find him he's sure to be grinning ear to ear.

Chad Dyson

Reppin' big time for the Vail area, Chad was instrumental in providing the beta on the creeks of the Eagle and Fyingpan drainages. His preference for little-known steep micro-creeks with waterfalls paid off big time for the rest of the boating community, as he's helped to open Cross Creek, the 2nd Gorge of Lime Creek, Black Gore Creek and a number of others. A man after our own hearts he is an adventure boater to the core.

Chris Smith

First off, big apology from both of us for simultaneously spilling our drinks mid-conversation in different vehicles while running the Black Boxes shuttle (to Sam too). Chris runs rafts doing research for the Division of Wildlife and our trip down the Black Boxes together will not soon be forgotten. He's a notable member of the Utah posse as shown in his photos of the North Fork Duchesne.

Dan Crain

Posthumous contributions of Dan's were made by his family and friends to the Bighorn Chapter, the place that he loved most in the world. He was a great man, a true explorer, and he inspired a small but vibrant community of paddlers in of all unlikely places, South Dakota. He is missed dearly by all of us and we hope that he is wearing a proud smile as he flips through the pages his stories created. May his legacy live on. LTP!

Dan Piano

Routt County River Enforcement Cobra Squad leader Dan Piano has been paddling since 1993. He started out in a Perception Spirit that he bought with lawn mowing money. He grew up paddling on the Tarrifville Gorge section of the Farmington River in CT. The east gave him a huge appreciation for playboating, frequenting the Deerfield, T-Ville, and Lachine as much as he could. In 2003 he moved to Colorado and was promptly taken to OBJ for his first creek run. It was an eye opening experience. His most recent endeavors include snowmobile guiding, carpentry, looking for new runs, and founding Vewda Productions in association with Routt County River Enforcement, The Cobra Squad, and Bliss-Stick Kayaks.

Dustin Obrien

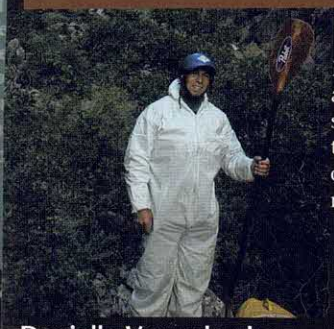
Representin' for Farmington, New Mexico, Dustin knows what a quality river trip is all about – whether it's a 30-minute surf session at the Farmington Whitewater Park or a solo journey down the Lower San Juan.

Darren Livingston

Darren lives in the Highlands of Denver and looks damn good, even when he's paddling the local Clear Creek runs or charging down Gore—in an old school Gradient. The guy designs beer cans for a living and if he asks you for five bucks at the take-out, be wary of what he'll do for it. His shots of the great boating on the forks of the Saint Vrain River helped to complete our coverage of one of our favorite areas.

Dana Kopf

Dana owns Four Corners Whitewater and is a hardcore catarafter. You might find him relaxing on a peaceful desert float or maxing out his adrenaline levels attempting the first raft descent of Vallecito. His expertise helped us to include the Slickrock Floats of the Dolores and Lower San Juan rivers.



Dave Bumgarner

Dave provided a small stack of fine photographs for this project and his editing prowess was well used on the lower Arkansas stretches. He can also be found showing of his technique as the subject of photos in the New Mexico and Western Slope chapters. If you ever need a multi-day trip organizer he is your man, as his position with Army entails just that.

Dave Collins

One of Aaron Pruzan's regular hair boating partners, Dave Collins has been a driving force on the Jackson Scene for a long time. His photographs and description of the Blackrock help to document the lesser known regions of the Jackson Hole area on the west side of Togwotee Pass.

Danielle Vogenbeck

One of the original creators of the Golden Community Rodeo, Danielle's passion for bringing the paddlers of the region together every Wednesday of the season could be felt all the way from Washington St. on the way the competition. Her studies of social networks played nicely into her organization of the event, creating a true community atmosphere. For your girl power fix dig into her story Babes on Bailey.

Dave Pegg

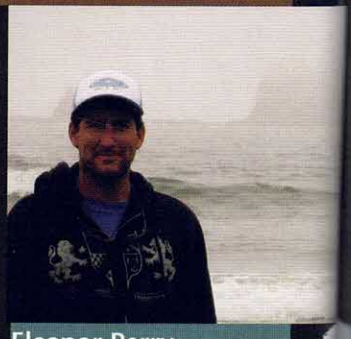
Publisher extraordinaire, Dave is a legend in the climbing world for his beautiful line of full color climbing books created under Wolverine Publishing. A former editor for Climbing magazine, Dave was instrumental in getting this project completed and onto the shelves. He has served as a true mentor and inspiration during the creation of this book. And he doesn't just write about climbing, he is a full time addict with the skills to match and a ranch 15 miles from the storied climbing mecca of Rifle, CO.

Dave Schroeder

Dave pretty much owns the Clarks Fork chapter in terms of photos. We had some shots, but his classic perspectives on one of the country's most beautiful areas just could not be denied. I first met Dave on the Stix and Stones run and had the pleasure of guiding him down it. He returned the favor two weeks later by guiding me down the Box—using only hand paddles and running every major drop.

Darren Beck

Darren is a GIS wizard and with only a small degree of assistance from the authors and an intern, he put together the beautiful maps for each chapter. He lives in Silver Plume and skies Loveland more than you. He honed his map making skills while earning a masters's degree in water resources from Colorado State University and he continues to work as a hydrologists at a Denver consulting firm. He enjoys skiing and traveling the globe in search of adventure and new experiences.



Dave Pennington

Dave's description and photograph of the South Fork Buffalo and his shot of the Warm Springs Cave help bring to life the Togwotee Pass area runs. These runs are a great resource for the creek paddler visiting Jackson Hole or Cody, opening up a couple more options when you're in the area looking to get your fix.

Eleanor Perry

Eleanor is a ripping paddler who lives in Durango. Her story helps us remember that understanding the complex inner game of kayaking is just as important as practicing your stroke technique. She is sponsored by Dagger, Immersion Research

Gordon Dalton

A teacher on the East Coast, Gordon has been using his summer vacation to make a yearly pilgrimage to the Southern Rockies for a long time. He has run more runs in Colorado than you have and his exploration has opened up a handful of excellent new runs for you to try, from Needle Creek in the Animas drainage to the monster waterfall in the Cinnamon Gorge. Gordon will be back and will likely be looking for someone to paddle with, so sharpen up your skills, and get ready to fire up something big in case he comes a knockin'.

Greg Von Doersten

With clients such as The North Face, Men's Journal, National Geographic Adventurer and GQ, Greg is one of the pre-eminent adventure photographers in the United States. His photos of the New Fork River in the Winds show the true beauty of that isolated range. You can see more of his work at www.gregvondoersten.com.

Gus Gusciora

Gus owns and operates G-Stop Photography in Telluride, CO. He is an accomplished photojournalist and splits his time between Telluride and Santa Catalina, Panama. Lucky dog. Contact him at gusphoto@hotmail.com

Jared Johnson

One of Colorado's most prolific explorers, this Steamboat/Durango/Chico/wherever the steep paddling is native has uncovered such classics as the 2nd Gorge of Lime Creek, Falls Creek and the West Fork San Juan. Jared is also quite skilled in a kayak and he is one of the few people that Kyle tends to follow more than lead. He managed to submit more of Jen Ross' photos (of himself) than photos he took himself, but his personal photographs are also spread liberally throughout the book. When you meet him you won't have to see his degree to know that he owns master's in shit talking—and this book won't help any either.

Jen Ross

Jen is an outdoors woman period. She is better than most men at every sport she tries and she is one of our leading photo contributors. The quality of the shots, not to mention the quality of the adventures they came from, speaks highly of her bold spirit and determination. She can be found in Durango most likely enjoying in the surrounding wilderness.

Jason Roberts

Jason's shots from the Roaring Fork and Fryingpan drainages gave life to an area that has received very little recent coverage but where the boating is good enough that it deserves more.

Ed Ho

Ed is a Utah paddler who helped to complete our picture of the northern ranges of that state with photos of the Upper Provo River and Sixth Water Creek. In a state that sees little documentation, we commend Ed for capturing the Utah posse in action.

Gary Edgeworth

No other paddler in the southern Rockies brings more stories of running the gnar-gnar at high water to the table than Gary Edgeworth. His Mountainbuzz antics are legendary yet not always PC—a trait which only makes us love him more. His honesty about the consequences of river running shine through in his tribute to his hero Paul Zirkelbach and through his dedication to the river he has shown us all a thing or two about living life to the fullest. If there is a hair run that you are proud of running, he has probably run it at flood. He was a major force for us in the editing department, even if he got pretty opinionated at times. One email read, "Are you including the 2nd Gorge of Lime Creek? If so, I want a say in the rapid named 'Deep Throat.' Jared is a fuck stick and I was the first off the last two drops. I named 'Deep Throat,' Balls in Your Mouth, because that's where they went when I ran it."

Josh Heise

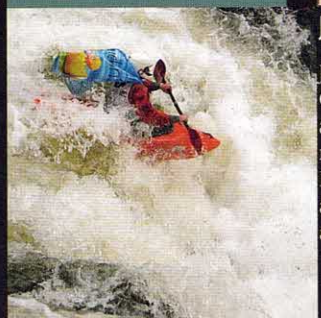
Representin' big time for Grand Junction, Josh hooked up photos of nearly every aspect of paddling you can find on the Western Slope. From freestyle shots of the town run to his beautiful fall shot of Escalante Creek, his contribution provided the visuals for the far western edge of Colorado. A Mesa State College student (and I'm guessing graduate by the time you read this), Josh is one of the hardy few still exploring RMNP, where he's worked for the park for a few summers now.

Evan Ross

A product of the Rendezvous Kayak Club in Jackson Hole, E-RO sports flawless technique and a pretty serious boof stroke. His exploration, around the Rockwood area of the Animas led to the re-opening of Pandoras Box as a legitimate run. As a grom, under the wing of Aaron Pruzan, he explored much of the Wind River Range. He traveled to Madagascar recently completing first descents on the relatively unexplored island and he now attends the University of Wyoming in between kayaking adventures. A true wilderness paddler E-RO can, and will, show you how to get it done.

Fred Zacherl

Front Range Fred is probably the only person I know that can talk straight through a six hour drive, and still have something interesting to say an hour later. A great friend, smart, and the pics of him speak volumes of his paddling/hucking abilities.



Joe Keck

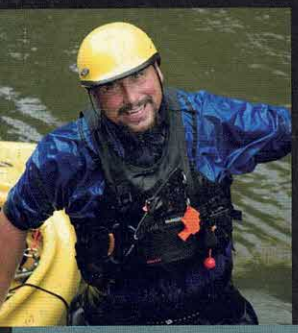
Joe is the founding (and sometimes only) member of the Mank Crew. Despite loving the mank, he gets serious in the winter as a Ski Patroller at Keystone and he once used his CPR skills to resuscitate a commercial rafter in Gore, saving the man's life. His enthusiasm for the sport is unmatched and he helped in all facets of the book, donating his photography, editing time, and writing descriptions. He is just an all around great guy.

Justin Johnson

Justin took the time to document his run of the Gila River and to edit our descriptions, making the beta that much more solid. His explorations of the small craft adventure runs of southern New Mexico have opened the door for adventurous beginner to intermediate paddlers to get out on early season desert retreat.

Len Eckstein

As a major volunteer for the Golden Community Rodeo, Len uses his sharpened graphic design skills to draw people to these fun filled events. He also lays claim to the original CKS Squad t-shirt design. His beta on the squirt opportunities around the region shows that he is a true lover of the mystery move.



Larry Rice

A lover of the wild desert stretches of southern Utah, Larry dished the beta on the Escalante River and contributed a couple of beautiful shots of Escalante and the Verde. He is a based out of Buena Vista and is contributing editor for Canoe and Kayak Magazine.

Kevin Crochetier

One of the original Clear Creek of the Ark regulars, Kevin used to scare the newbies as one of the few paddlers that wore elbow pads and a full face helmet—in the mid-90s. Currently a Denver resident, it's always refreshing to meet him for a beer and talk about the good old days. It's even more refreshing to rally Bailey at high flow with him. His story of redemption in the Black Canyon is a tribute to his mental strength and love for the river. A pupil of one of the most prominent contributors of CRC2, Tim Brown, Kevin has a classic style.

Lyle Phetteplace

A former heavy equipment operator, Lyle is a contractor in the Denver area and he compliments his boof stroke with a firm knowledge of how to remodel a home. An avid instructor and now part owner of Renaissance Adventure Guides, it's safe to say that you're in good hands when following his instruction. The one thing you can't deny is his smile as he rips down a snow covered hill setting the kayak speed record, charges down the gnar or demos a house.

Melissa Mora

Melissa provided beautiful shots of the NF Crystal and Eldorado canyon. A graduate of CU Boulders Environmental Engineering program she's an avid snowboarder and yoga enthusiast. She's also Andy Blakeslee's preferred shuttle bunny (his words).

Leif Embertson

Leif (pronounced Life) is obviously the child of Scandinavian hippie parents and his name tends to be a constant source of entertainment during kayaking trips. A proud member of the Poudre Posse, he never lets these good natured jests get to him or effect his paddling. Instead he channels his energy into using the force (Leif Force) to style the steepest creeks in the region. Missing parts of his toes from a frostbite accident while climbing Mt Rainier has kept him from becoming a basketball star, but he sure can paddle. He's also a victim of Gore (see photo).

Jed & Katie Selby

As the most recognizable brother sister duo in the Southern Rockies, the Selby's know how to get it done. Besides being amazing paddlers, photographers and all around great people, they have are the driving force behind the South Main development project. South Main is a riverside community in Buena Vista, built under the principles of New Urbanism where the paddle park, groceries and the hardware store are all within walking distance of your front doorstep – if you happen to be so fortunate to live there. If you are interested in learning more about or living in this paddler's eden, check out their website at www.southmainco.com.

Kevin Colburn

Kevin is the National Stewardship Director for American Whitewater. American Whitewater's team of stewards are involved in just about every river issue across the US, representing paddlers interests and giving the rivers themselves a voice where they otherwise would not have one. His dedication to making the world a better place to paddle has paid dividends for all of us and for that he has gained our highest respect.

Marcia Ready

Marcia has earned a reputation of regulating the lines on the Embudo and other New Mexico Classics. She definitely regulated on us as well, making sure that we didn't butcher the names on the Brazos and Pueblo runs.

Mike Hagadorn

Mike was instrumental in our coverage of the Summit County area. Without him, summers for lift operators in the area would be looking bleak, but with his beta and photographs some resort workers are going to re-think the idea of being year round residents. He and his brother Kyle are never afraid to fire up the unknown or the steep and manky or both.

Nick & Nicole Wigston

Nick is the safety champion but he has a habit of scaring the uninitiated by vomiting at the put-in. His affordable rescue courses have set up more than a few paddlers with the essential skills needed to run the river safely. Nicole is a GIS expert and also an astute editor. Her skills were especially handy in helping to make us at least somewhat intelligible throughout 300 pages worth of text. Together they make quite a team, stomping boofs and carving snowboard lines—pretty much LTD'n it.

Marty Cronin

As the Jackson Kayaks Ambassador, Marty has been spreading the fun for some time now. A mortgage broker that became addicted to kayaking a few years ago, his dedication to improving the sport is stronger than many paddlers who've been kayaking twice as long. He's been one of the most supportive contributors from the start, not just by his writing and photography skills, but for his tireless editing and verbal encouragement through the tough times. He also caught more than a few major content mistakes, which are by far the hardest to catch. Undoubtedly one of the more visible members of the Front Range kayaking community, don't be surprised to meet The Craw on the river.

Norm Cooling

Norm was kind enough to contribute a few shots from his collection of photographs from the Numbers on the Arkansas River. Norm has made the definitive class IV run in the region his stomping grounds where he owns the company Photos By The Numbers. Check it out at www.photosbythenumbers.com.

Nate Klema

Nate's exploration of the Forks of the Animas, NM and the Yampa helped us to include the proper beta for you to explore these areas. He basically pinned Silverton up on the map as a paddling destination, rather than just the put-in for the Upper A.

Nora Flucke

Nora's been paddling for over ten years in the Durango area—a sport she picked up while living in the heart of the Four Corners. We're jealous. Nora contributed excellent photos of the Rio Pueblo and Elk River. Now if Nate would have only submitted some pictures of her!

Mark Cohen

Mark represents hardcore for the 303 wherever he travels. Never afraid to make a trek out of Denver to find the goods, his freestyle shots of the M-wave are some of the best ever captured. He also helped to uncover Turkey Creek's mysteries.

Pete Stromberg

Owning a doctorate in being a cocky bastard has earned Pete a reputation for being an ass-hole. Far from it, you might just say he's opinionated. The guy can kayak like a champ and he will pull you out of the drink when you need it. He's survived more desperate situations then he'd probably care to remember, but he has included many for your reading pleasure in his lessons of creek boating. You can also see him stomping a boof or two or six throughout the book.

Reed Koeneke

Reed was practically born in a kayak and though he rips he still can not drink legally. His shots of the M-Wave and West Fork Clear Creek show his emerging talent as a photographer as well.

Patrick Forester

Patrick is an adventure coordinator at the Pioneer Charter School in Fort Collins. A man of many trades, his favorite outdoor activities include Rock Climbing, Kayaking and Backcountry Skiing, but offer him any adventure and he'll be ready to rumble. His heartfelt words about James McFarland are touching, even to the reader who has never paddled.

Sam Chesley

Sam was our Utah Connection. He not only dedicated a ton of his time to writing and editing our Utah sections, he also spent a fair amount of energy rounding up the rest of the community to get on board and lend a hand. We will never forget our spiritual journey through the Black Boxes with Sam. He always seems to be involved in the exploration of Utah's little known creeks, that is when he's not ripping up the powder before it turns to melt. His trip down the Dirty Devil can be seen in the picture, which is especially cool because he rallied solo.

Steve Ward

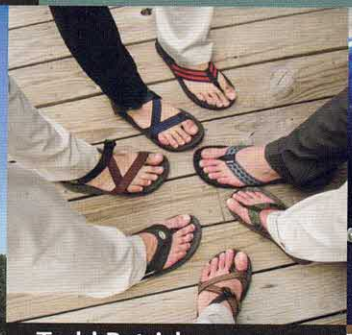
Steve wrote up his backyard run, Miller Creek, after making the first descent when it finally had some water in it. He is an excellent Durango area local to try and search out if you're looking for beta.

Steven Steinberg

Steven is a Telluride local who has quietly been picking apart the surrounding drainages over the years with the likes of Lorne Glick and the late Russell Kelly. In a region that had to most of Colorado gone unnoticed, Steven spilled the beans on the entire set of high elevation creek runs in the Upper Dolores and Upper San Miguel.

Ron Karpilo

Freelance science and adventure photographer, Ron and his wife Lacy live in Fort Collins, Colorado, where they enjoy the diverse kayaking, skiing, and climbing opportunities that the state has to offer. Check out his catalog at www.karpilo.com.



Todd Patrick

A Roaring Fork Valley Local, Todd was around for the early descents of the Inner Crystal Gorge and his shot of Zute Chute portrays the frightening beauty of the inner sanctuary. Check out www.toddpatrick.com

Tina Swan

Tina is much more than a contributor to me. As my girlfriend of a few years, we currently own a house together in downtown Denver. She's the one that is constantly critiquing and editing, never afraid to tell us when she thinks something sucks. She puts up with our disastrous mess in the basement office, the food that we occasionally leave on the kitchen counter, and numerous hours of not seeing us as we work day and night to bring you this book. Without her support of me this project wouldn't have been possible. Most importantly, I love her.

Steve Kahn

A familiar face on the Clear Creek circuit, Steve is just one of those guys who needs his after-work fix—and then he needs it on the weekends too. He learned to paddle with his wife Katherine and their annual river bonanza brought us the insights into the White River found in East Utah.

Scott Baker

Representin' the new school of Durango, Scott has regularly been firing up the classic and obscure creek runs of the Weminuche Wilderness. His photos and beta from the Los Pinos and Upper Chama provided some much needed content for those runs.

Richard Koshak

Photography is both Richard's vocation and his passion, giving him the opportunity to explore a vast array of subject matter. His autumn photos of the Big Thompson aptly portray the off-season roadside gnar near Estes Park. Check out his fine work at www.lightworkerphoto.com.

Tim Hawkins

Tim is the web guru amd founding member of the ice cream rules. He kicks it in Durango and can show you a thing or two on the town freestyle run. We like him because he is truly one of the most genuine guys out there.

Tim Payne

The man in the yellow Savage, Tim is a local Utah legend. He has paddled more runs in Utah than probably anyone alive and his insights into the kayaking of the Salt Lake State were essential to this book. A shout out to his lovely wife is in order as well, one for correcting our mispronunciation of the Duchesne River and two, for playing shuttle bunny for the Zion Narrows.

Tony Czech

Tony is Kyle's roommate and close friend and was therefore essentially forced into becoming a major contributor for this book. Luckily he didn't mind one bit and his brilliant photographs light up numerous sections of the book, especially the Jackson Hole chapter. A dedicated athlete, Tony is disgustingly good at whatever sport he is participating in, whether he's been practicing his technique for ten years or ten days. He spends a big chunk of his time climbing, where an average afternoon in Eldo could be an ascent of C'est La Vie, only because it's too far of a drive to the Grand Teton. Check out his photographic work at tonyczech.com.

Todd Gillman

Looking mean in a wife beater, with burly tattooed sleeves on both arms, TG is really a pretty nice guy. He gets just about as fired up as anybody can about kayaking and that shit can be contagious. His blog The Range Life is wildly popular with paddlers, and even a small handful of teenage girls (most confusing it with the TRL of MTV, but whatever). Before anyone even knew what the Vacation to Hell Contest was, The Range Life posse was out exploring little known drainages and fresh camera angles. Todd is the heart and soul of the blog and his antics are always entertaining. He tends to re-locate often, but it seems that he may have found a permanent home in the Pacific Northwest. It's hard to blame him with BC in his backyard and more rivers and creeks than you could run in two lifetimes surrounding him in all directions.

Tye Eyden

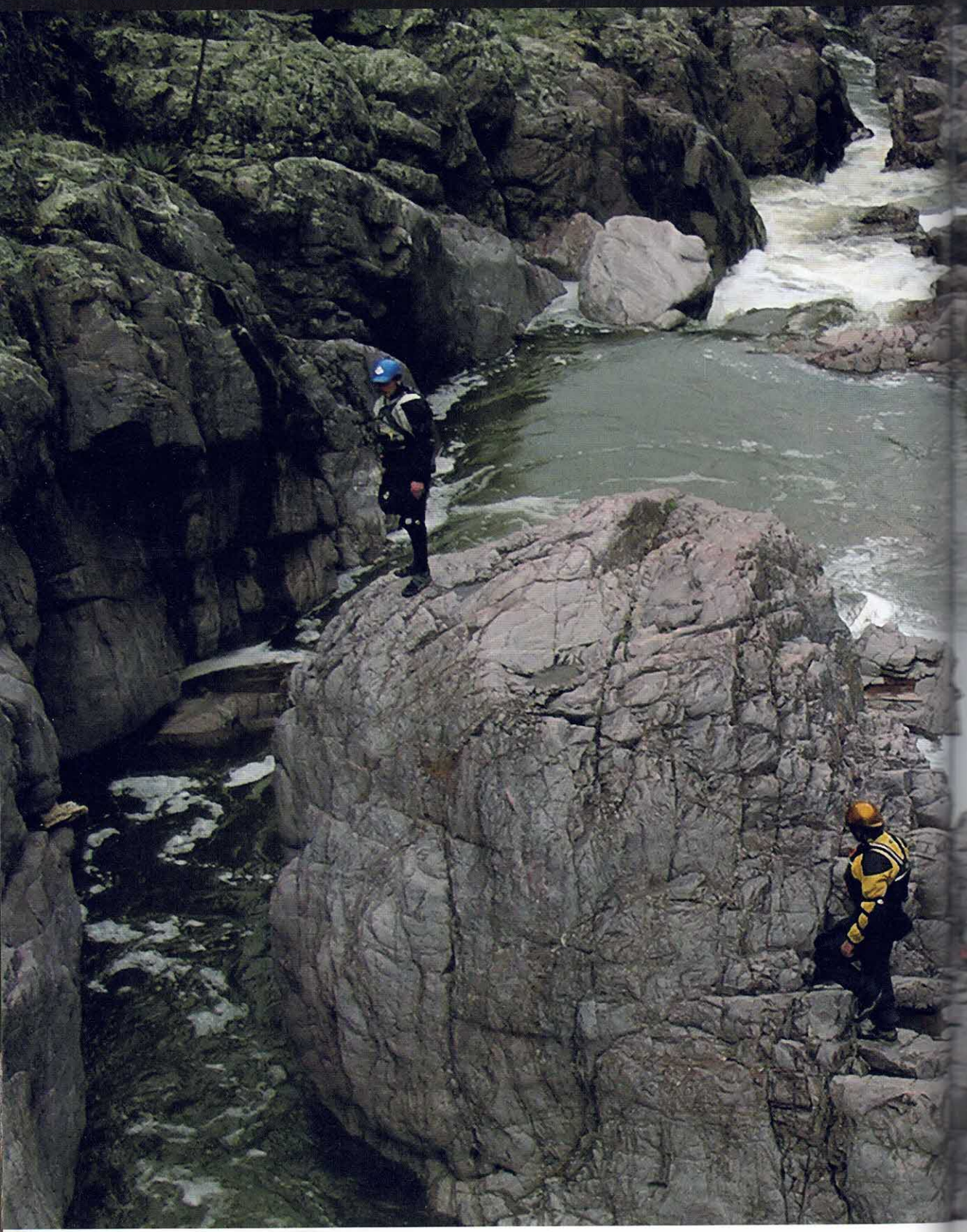
Tye has an eye for photography. He let us use many of his fine images from Colorado. He is an extremely good kayak instructor and a seasoned paddler. His company Tye's Eye Photography can be found at www.tyeseye.com.

Tyson & Megan Titensor

Tyson was a major editor and contributor to the text on North Utah. He's also a lot of fun to paddle with now that he lives in the Boulder area and close to the authors. I think his Utah friends miss him though. Megan contributed a great photo of the Ogden River.

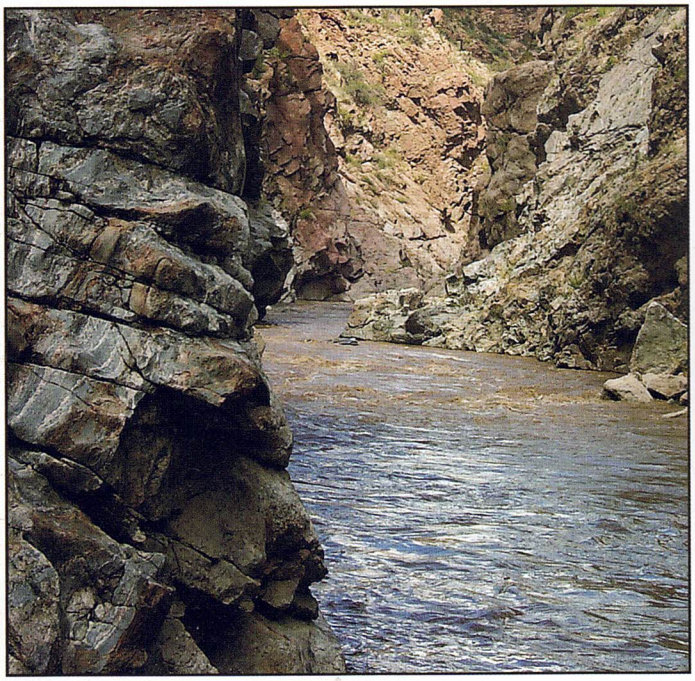
Tyler Williams

One can not talk about the pursuit of muddy paddling in Arizona without mentioning Tyler Williams. Most of the Arizona beta used in this book, and for that matter, much of the beta out there, has been provided by Williams. His zeal for the exploration of Arizona canyons has culminated with the recent publication of Paddling Arizona. The book is a thorough guide to boating Arizona's vast array of runnable rivers and creeks. An AZ native, Tyler grew up in Prescott but spent his summers in Sandpoint, Idaho. His love for the river was forged on rafting outings with his family in Idaho where his cousin Mary was a dory guide. According to Williams, "Mary was really the original "funhog" in my extended family - ski patrolling at Snowbird, guiding mountaineering on Mt. Rainier, and eventually river guiding." His father encouraged his pursuit of adventure too. He flew fighter jets in World War II, returned to play pro football and then eventually went on to coach at the college and professional level. "He was the most determined, willful person I've ever known, and I suppose he passed a little of that on to me." His mom passed on her adventurous spirit and a recipe for exploration was born. "I have a picture of her in my office standing on top of Mt. Washington, one of the windiest places on earth - in the 1940s." During his first kayaking lesson, taught by renowned kayaker Grant Amaral, he swam 18, yes count them, almost all of your digits, both hands and feet, 18 times on the Main Payette. From there, his girlfriend and now beautiful wife Lisa, taught him all he needed to know about running hard whitewater. A spring foray guiding on the Chattooga in South Carolina solidified his developing skill set and when he returned to Arizona in the spring of 1992 he found the dry creek beds he was familiar with flowing like Willy Wonka's chocolate river. "Paddling in the Sonoran Desert is unique. Nowhere else in the world can you paddle down a challenging bedrock granite creek lined by thick saguaro forests on both banks." Williams found himself magnetically drawn to paddling the mostly untapped wilderness canyons of AZ, despite the dynamic flow cycles of the state's ecosystems. "It forces you to drop everything and go boating. Often the water won't be there tomorrow." Tyler dished the beta to us on our first highly successful AZ effort and he encourages the adventurous among us to sample the Sonoran stash for ourselves. Tyler lives in Flagstaff where he runs the Funhog Press with his wife and paddles Oak Creek outside of nearby Sedona whenever it runs. www.funhogpress.com.



Todd Gillman ES & KM Christopher Creek

Gila River



The Canyon Country of southern New Mexico isn't a likely place to find much of anything or anyone, and that's what makes the Gila River great. A tributary to the Salt, the Gila's muddy waters snake their way from the Gila National Forest to the Sequoia hills of Arizona, carving an existence through lands that have supported only the most rugged of inhabitants. Petroglyphs and ancient dwellings hide just out of sight of the lush shoreline, and wildlife is abundant throughout this desert oasis. Runnable flows are a rarity. Most years the Gila River will run briefly or not at all, and at other times flows will get as high as an impressive 2000 cfs. Although flash floods and the occasional tree strainer are possibilities, its unlikely that either will damper the mood of this scenic adventure float. Plan on a very relaxed adventure, filled with sunscreen, naps, and warm, star-filled nights.

Wilderness Run

This is the highlight of the Gila, and as with any great overnighter, it comes complete with hot springs and side canyon hikes. The whitewater is tame, and self-supporting a kayak trip is usually the best way to run this section. The inflatables are the most prized of river craft here, with their ability to hop from campsite to campsite while filled with three days of luxury gear—even though it can be run in two days. The risk of getting beached is ever-present. If you decide to push rubber through here, look for the largest flows with the smallest raft.

Plan on a long shuttle for this one, and a prized trip of solitude in an untouched canyon. There's a chance that you won't see another group on the river for the duration of your trip. Leave your camp cleaner than when you found it.

Directions: To get to the take-out, drive to Hwy 180 in Cliff and head east on Hwy 293. Eventually the road turns to the gravel FS 755, and in two miles is Mogollon Creek, and the take-out on the Gila. To reach the put-in, return to Hwy 180 and drive to Silver City. Drive north on Hwy 15 and put in at the Grapevine CG.

CFS	150<min<400<best
Class	II<500<III
Quality	★★★
Gradient	20 fpm
Length	40 miles
Season	March, April
Gauge	Gila Riv nr Gila, NM
Put-in	Grapevine CG
Take-out	Mogollon Creek

Middle Box

This is the most challenging section of the Gila River and that isn't saying much. Regular flows cruise through this mini gorge at a steady class III pace, and even at fairly high water the action rarely gets tougher than mellow class IV. Instead, most of the must-make moves will be to miss the shoals that beach paddlers who choose the shallow fork. This is the best day stretch on the Gila.

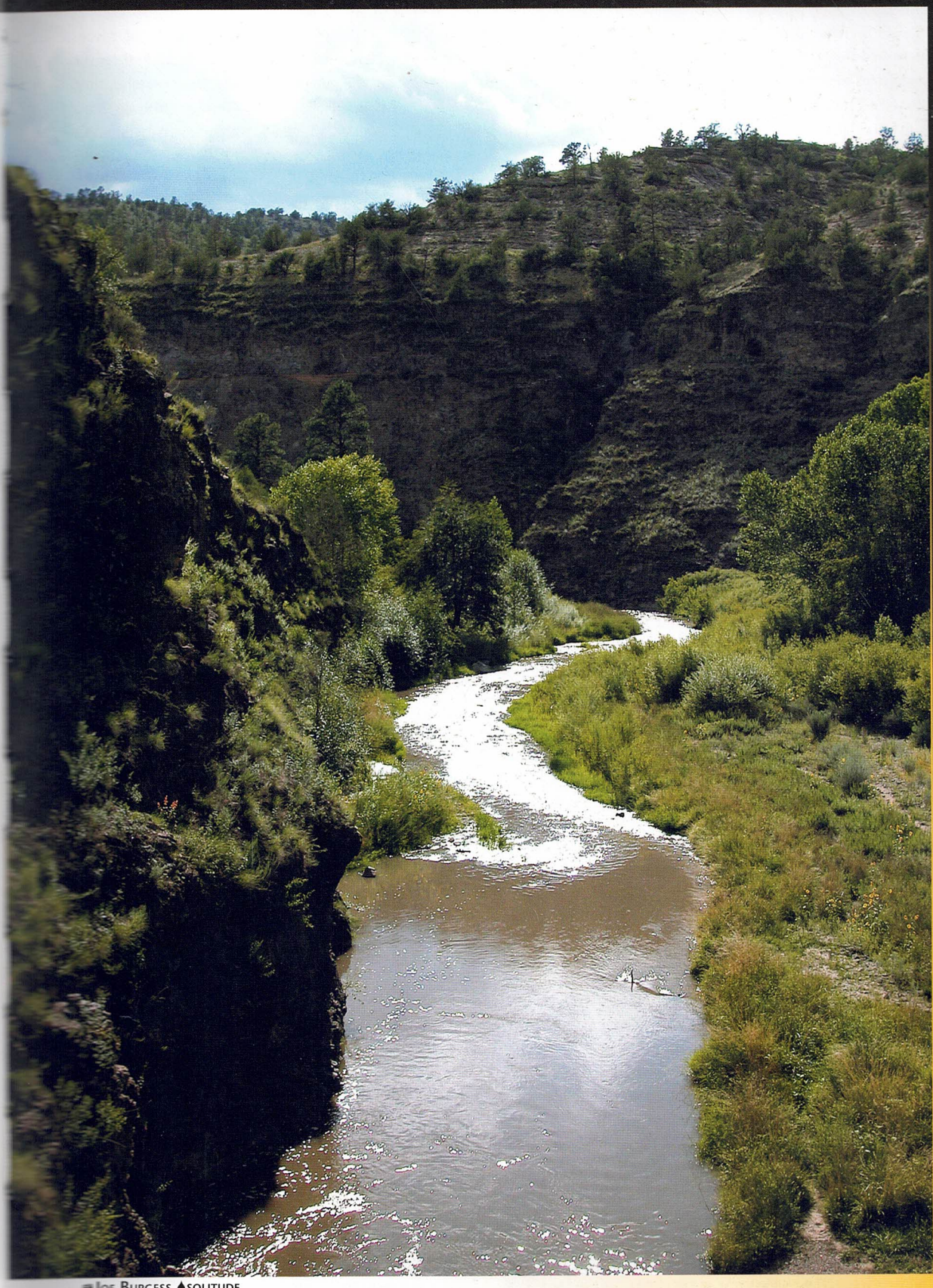
The first quarter of the run is non-eventful, and like much of the Gila is abundant with wildlife. On a single day trip one could encounter coyotes, raccoons, skunks, snakes (big ones), beaver, deer, and tons of birds thriving on this desert oasis. Once the walls close-in the bird-watching ceases, and paddling begins.

The narrowest parts of the canyon squeeze down to 15' wide—a helping

CFS	100<min<300<best
Class	III<500<III (IV-)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	20 fpm crux
Length	18 miles
Season	March, April
Gauge	Gila Riv nr Gila, NM
Put-in	Rd 809
Take-out	Red Rock

Justin Johnson ♦ The whitewater of the Middle Box

Scenic adventure floating at its finest. Pack up the IK and head to southwest New Mexico to listen to birds, step on big snakes, and camp in utter solitude.



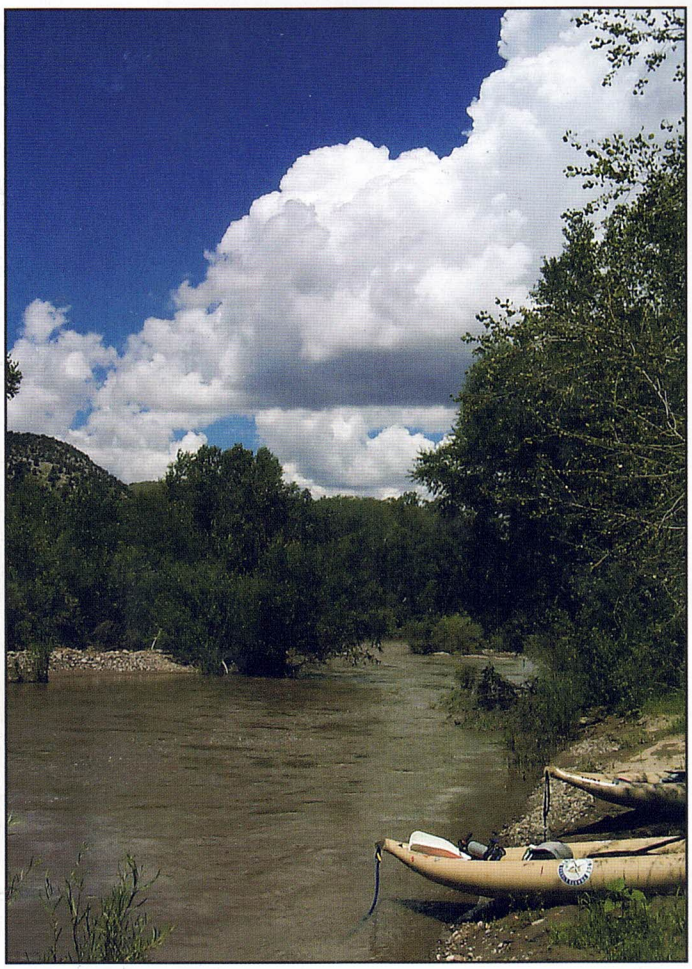
Arizona • Gila River

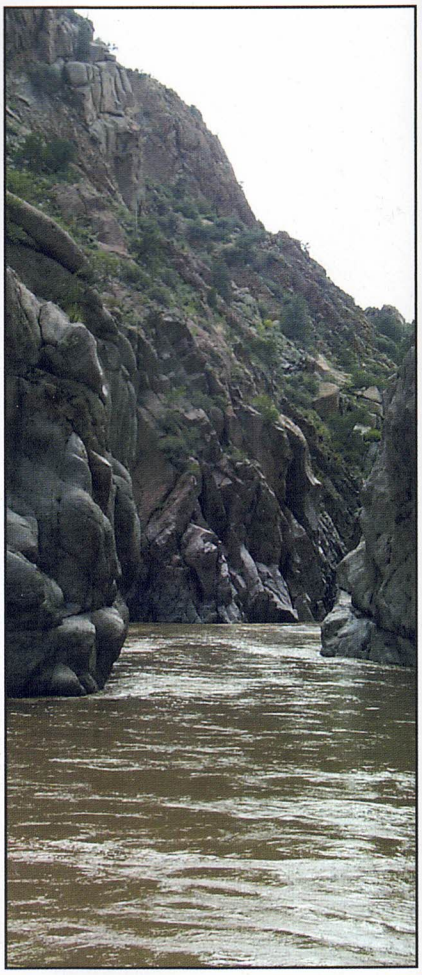
Joe Burgess ♦ Solitude

hand for groups making a low flow descent. At high water there aren't many eddies, but most paddlers won't need them, since only one or two holes have the power to stop an aggressive paddler. At low flow the boxed section takes on a pool-drop character.

Eventually the canyon opens up into the mostly private berg of Red Rock. The chain smoking, ATV driving locals are some of the nicest people you could meet—but avoid camping near the end of this run.

Directions: Drive NM 464 north from Hwy 70 to Red Rock and take out at the bridge to the north of town. Well-maintained roads can be used to get to the put-in near Cliff. The shortest option is the 1.5 hour shuttle along the dirt Red Rock Road (FR 851), then north on Mangas Valley Rd to Hwy 180. From Hwy 180 in Cliff, drive south on FR 809 for six miles to the put-in.





Lower Box

Have you ever purchased a "sounds of nature" CD? If so, the Lower Gila Box should be on your to do list. This bird lovers paradise features over 170 different species of the noisy little bastards—and thanks to their song the area is seeing increased protection by environmental agencies.

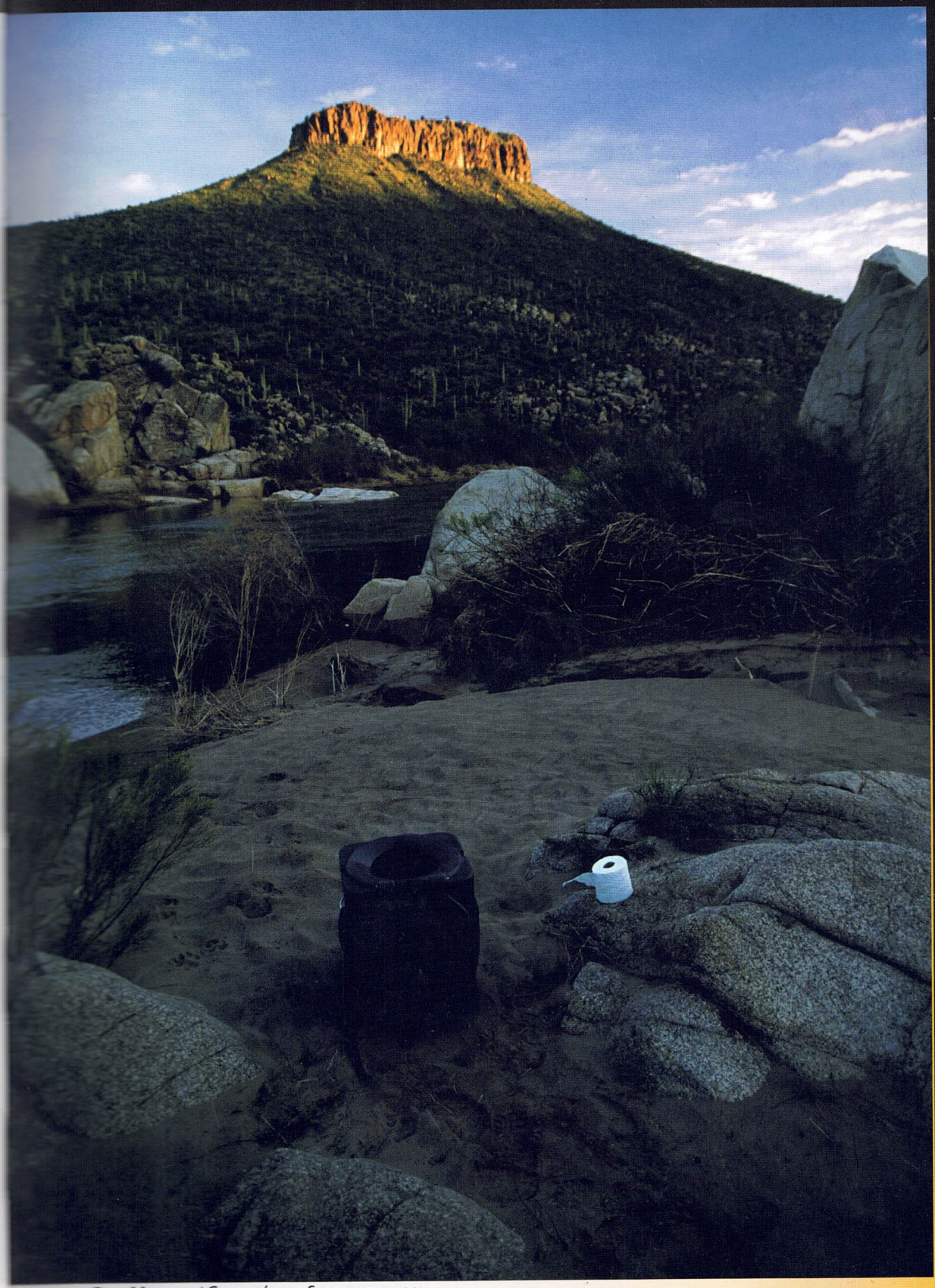
If birds aren't your thing, there's still plenty of enjoyment to be had in the Gila Corridor Riparian Area. The canyon is pristine and beautiful. A diversion dam should be portaged, but the rest of the on-river action is non-existent. Don't run this section for the whitewater. Exploration on shore can uncover several petroglyph panels, as well as a number of primitive rock shelters—a rarity in the southwest.

Directions: Put in at the town of Red Rock. The take-out is southeast of Virden, at the Hwy 92 bridge.

CFS	100<min<400<best
Class	II
Quality	★★
Gradient	10 fpm
Length	19 miles
Season	March, April
Gauge	Gila Riv nr Gila, NM
Put-in	Red Rock
Take-out	Hwy 92 bridge

Justin Johnson ♦A great flow at the put-in

Justin Johnson ♦Middle Box Gorge



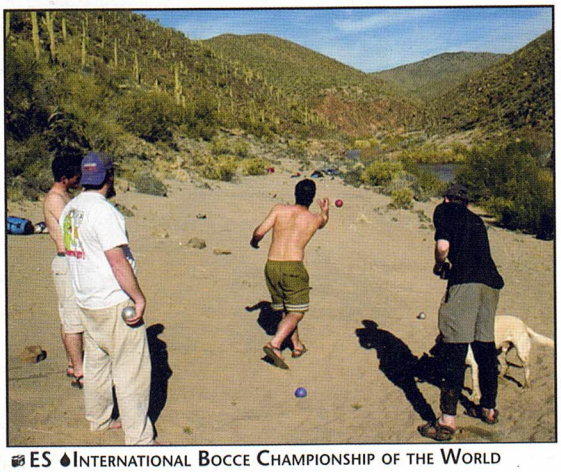
Brad Modesitt ♦ Groovin' on a Sunday afternoon

Salt River

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	350	850	1400	2500
Character	no rafts	one piece	bikini	topless
Class	III-	III	III+	III+
Quality	★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	25 fpm, 40 fpm action			
Remoteness	high, reservation then wilderness			
Hitchability	poor, fair with other paddlers			
Length	60 miles Wilderness Run, 7 miles Day Run			
Season	February, March, April			
Gauge	Salt above Roosevelt Reservoir			
Put-in	Hwy 60 Bridge			
Take-out	Hwy 288			

This is the official Wile E. Coyote river trip. Saguaro cacti rule here, as they come by the forest load and there's no need to leave the Acme products at home. This is raft support so bring the explosives and the kitchen sink too. Actually, you can leave the explosives. Tragically, the only class V rapid of the run was illegally dynamited in 1993 by a group of disgruntled raft guides tired of making an arduous portage. For the record, we let natural elements shape our rapids. One of the gentlemen in question, the alleged ring leader, after fleeing, was extradited for his offenses and spent 11 months of the best years of his life behind bars. Welcome to a true classic of the American southwest, ripe with outlaws, canyon walls and rattlesnakes.

The White and the Black Rivers drain the White Mountains of eastern Arizona and join forces to create the Salt. Deep in an ancient and rugged desert the Salt first forms the boundary between the Fort Apache and the San Carlos Indian Reservations. Its course then transects a chunk of Forest Service Wilderness bearing its name, before slowly backing up behind Roosevelt Reservoir. One of the best all-around multi-day runs in the west begins at the Hwy 60 Bridge and ends 60 miles downstream just above Roosevelt Reservoir.



ES ♦ International Bocce Championship of the World

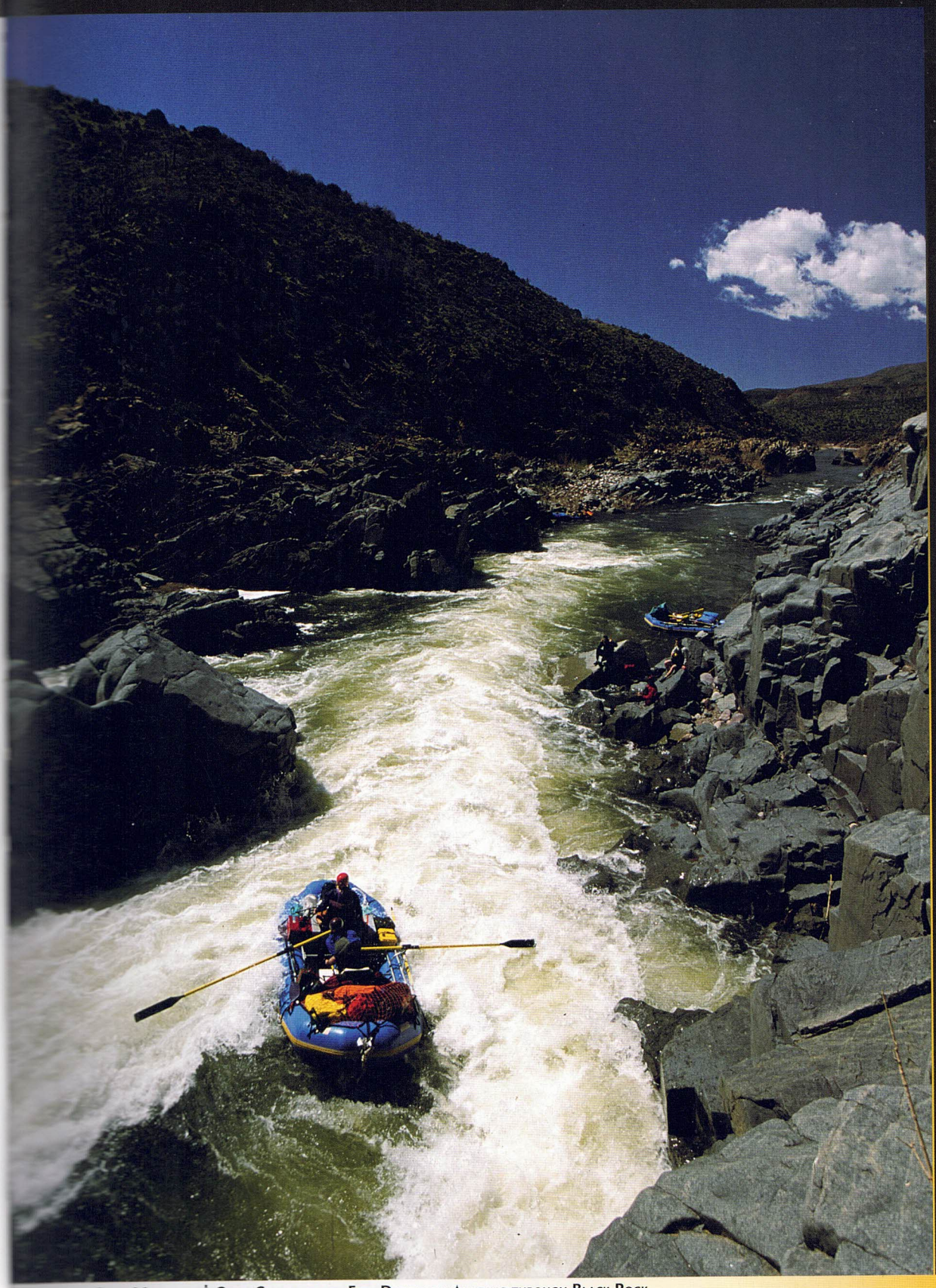
The Salt is more fun with water, so pray for heavy snow or a wet El Nino year. Predicting the flows for the coming season is near impossible, so timing your trip can be difficult. You pretty much just have to go for it—so do it! There are some great rapids for the novices and some entertaining play for the experts. The true allure of the Salt is the spring-break like conditions—five to seven days of rugged desert scenery, white sandy beaches, warm muddy water, girls in bikinis (only if you bring'em) and cold beer can all be found with the proper planning and execution.

If you don't have the time for a multi-day wilderness run, the Salt also offers the best class III day run in the state, the standard for the Phoenix area boating community. Putting on at the Hwy 60 bridge you will find some fun wave trains, a hole or two, long pools and generally good play, with the only drawback being a somewhat long and dusty shuttle.

To put on for the day run, or the wilderness run at Hwy 60, you must obtain a Fort Apache permit from the little trading post and gas station just north of the Hwy 60 bridge. As of 2006, an Apache one day use and camping pass is $15 per person and a one day use permit is $10 per person. For a day run you only need a one day pass. You will generally need both for the Wilderness Run, depending on when you arrive at the put-in. Camping at the put-in before launching will require two day-use and camping passes. The store is only open during the day, so if you arrive at night, make sure you go out to the store first thing in the morning (the ranger will be by shortly).

About seven miles below the launch site river left becomes Forest Service land and you can legally camp there with a wilderness permit on your second night. The res-

This is the official Wile E. Coyote river trip. Saguaro cacti rule here as they come by the forest load and there's no need to leave the Acme products at home.



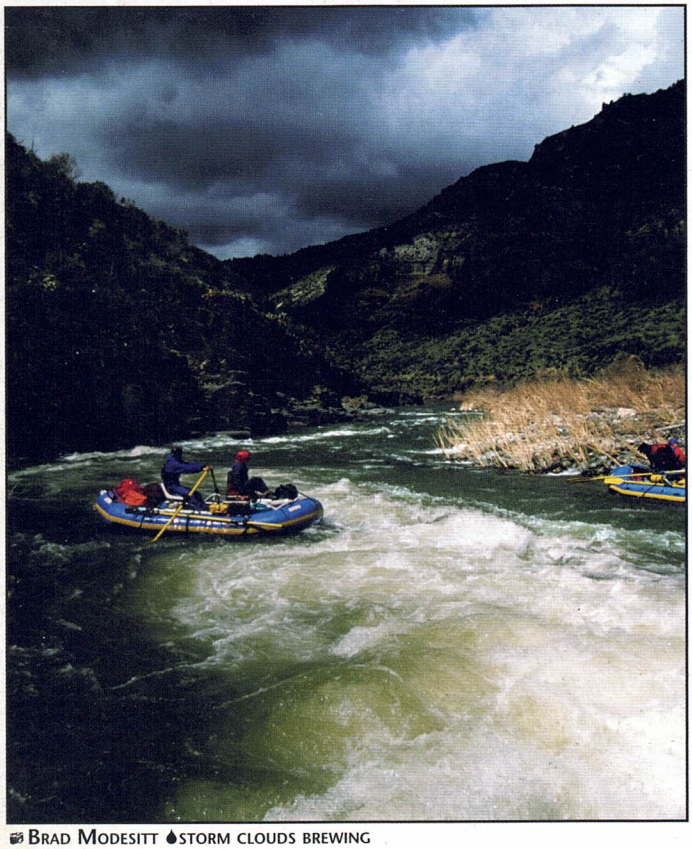
Brad Modesitt ⛹ Chad Craven rows, Erin Dickerson 💧sliding through Black Rock

ervation is still on river right for the first third of the run. For more information about the rules and regulations on Tribal lands and waters, contact the White Mountain Apache Outdoor Recreation Division at (928) 338-4385.

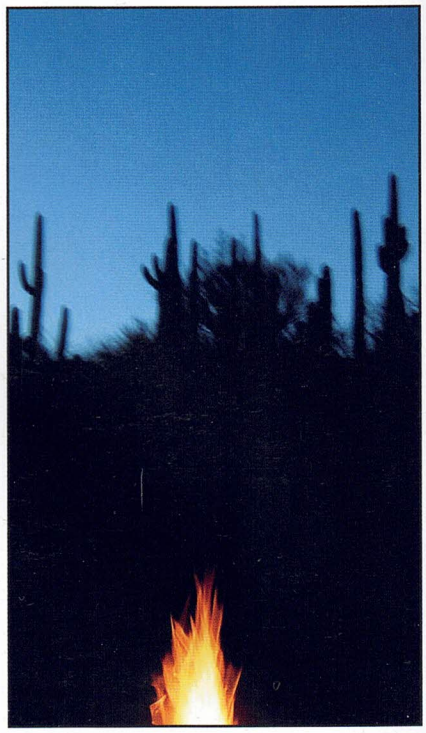
The Salt River above Hwy 60 is an amazing and illegal run. The Upper Upper cuts a deep incision through a wild chunk of White Mountain Apache land and they are the gatekeepers who vigilantly keep this run on lockdown. The Apaches are still as fierce as they were when they tenaciously defended their homeland 130 years ago. Brief glimpses into the canyon from the rim road hint at a classic class V whitewater experience, hidden deep within a forbidden zone, but a lack of good beta and fear of Apache prison time is enough to keep most groups off of this stretch. A kayaker was fatally pinned in 1993 at an extremely low flow of 200 cfs. A better flow range for this stretch is 500 cfs to 2600 cfs. The legality of access through the San Carlos Indian Reservation on river left has never been established.

There is some hope for the legal boating of this stretch in the future as the Apaches promote other outdoor activities such as skiing, hunting, camping and fishing. Someone with the right demeanor and an inside track with a tribal board member could probably convince them to allow legal descents, but for now it is best to respect the Apaches and to enjoy the legal sections of the Salt, as they are fantastic.

The Salt can also provide a good indicator for runs on the Mogollon Rim. If there is a significant difference between the Salt near Chrysolite gauge and the Salt above Roosevelt Reservoir gauge (the Roosevelt gauge should be higher), then there is probably some input from the creeks coming off the rim such as Cibeque and Cherry. What this means is that there is a good chance that many of the other creeks coming off the rim are running.



BRAD MODESITT ♦STORM CLOUDS BREWING



ES ♦THE END OF A WASTED DAY ON THE RIVER

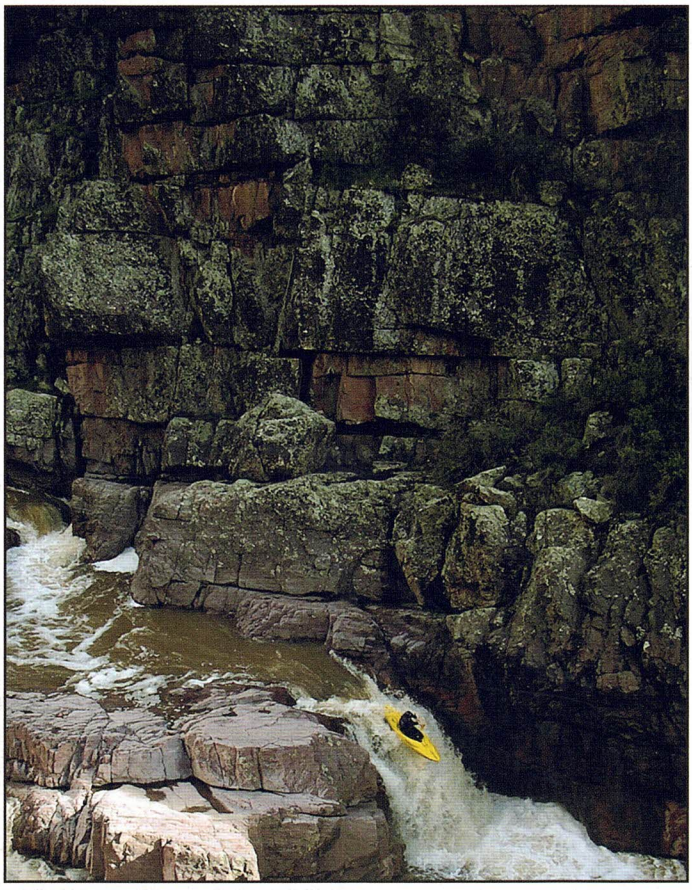
Permit: Running the multi-day wilderness section between March 1 and May 15 requires applying for, and receiving, a permit through the Tonto National Forest Service lottery system. Pulling a permit isn't too hard, especially if you and a couple of buddies apply separately. You can find the application and any other information you need at www.fs.fec.us/r3/tonto/recreation/re-permits-srpermits.shml or call the Tonto office at (602) 225-5200 to speak to someone in person.

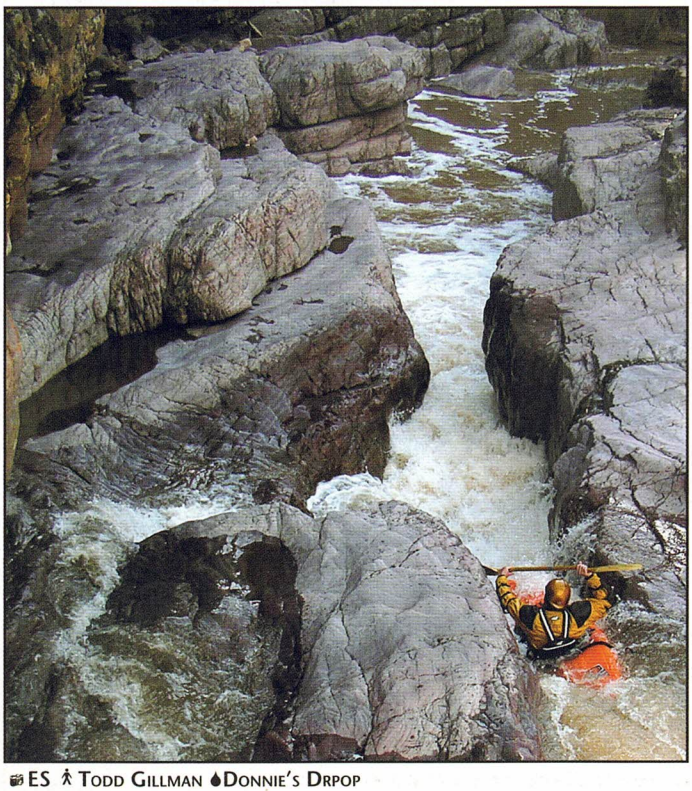
Directions

Take Hwy 60 south from Show Low to the bridge on the Fort Apache Reservation. The day run take-out is down the dirt road on river right near the Hwy 60 bridge. The Wilderness take-out is found by taking Hwy 60 further south to Hwy 88 in Globe. Follow Hwy 88 north to Hwy 288 and head north until it meets the Salt.

© Brad Modesitt • Cacti and beach camps

Christopher Creek





ES Todd Gillman Donnie's Drpop
ES KM White Russian

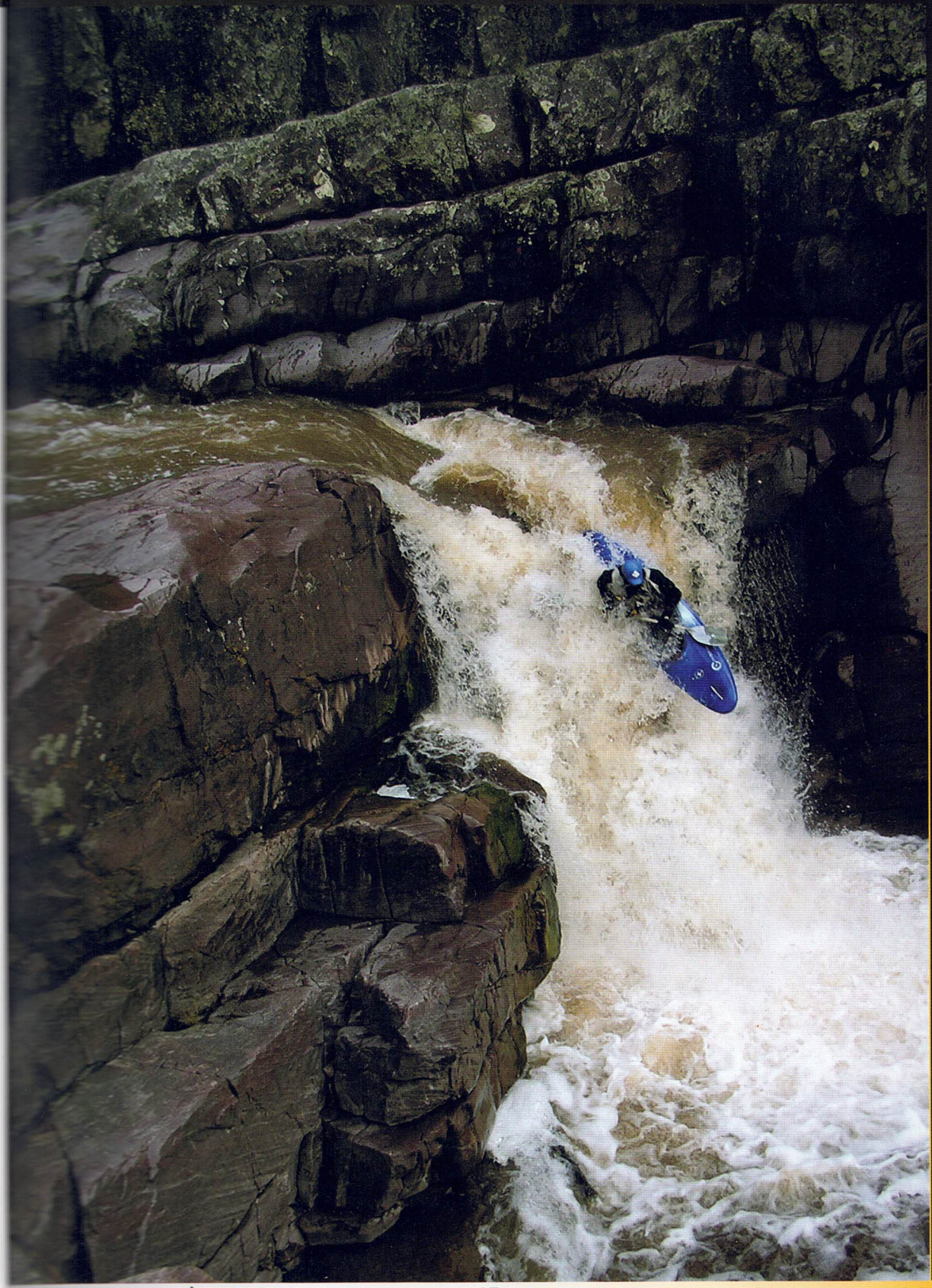
This is a very special little volcanic gem. A classic low volume steep creek with a unique bedrock character igniting dreams of a southwestern paddling paradise. As with most Arizona creeks, this run needs a solid snow-pack on the Mogollon Rim and/or a downpour of desert rain. You may find Christopher running in January strictly from run-off, or conversely you might find Christopher running in September strictly from rain. But to hedge your bets, head down to the Salt when it is running big in early spring. Check the Tonto gauge for flows over 300 cfs, both before and after your run on the Salt.

The run starts from either the Christopher Creek campground or, after receiving permission, from a Boy Scout Camp a mile or so down the road. From the campground it is an extremely shallow scrape to a very short warm-up gorge, which with the low flows necessary for this run should be entirely un-interesting. If things get interesting here, turn tail and hike river left back to the campground. Putting on at the Boy Scout Camp circumvents this short gorge and begins your descent only a few turns above the box canyon proper.

The gradient picks up immediately as you cross into the rhyolite geologic band. A tricky entrance rapid including a must-boof eight' ledge, delivers you into the box. Depending on flow you may want to take a hike on river right before committing to this first rapid and scout the entire gorge. On our descent we were able to scout every single drop from the proverbial horizon line, as there always seemed to be a pool or an eddy when we needed one. This run

CFS	90<min<120<best 250<scared
Class	V+ (Ps)
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	360 fpm crux
Length	4.5 miles
Season	Feb, March, Rain
Gauge	Tonto Crk nr Roosevelt
Put-in	Christopher CG
Take-out	Bear Flat CG

The crux drops in order are titled Donnie's Drop (perfect plank to 15'), The Big Lebowski (30'+ boof to slide to vert), and The Little Lebowski (curling 20').



Todd Gillman ES Roy's Smiles to Trials, very shallow LZ—the cause of the premature end to the first attempt

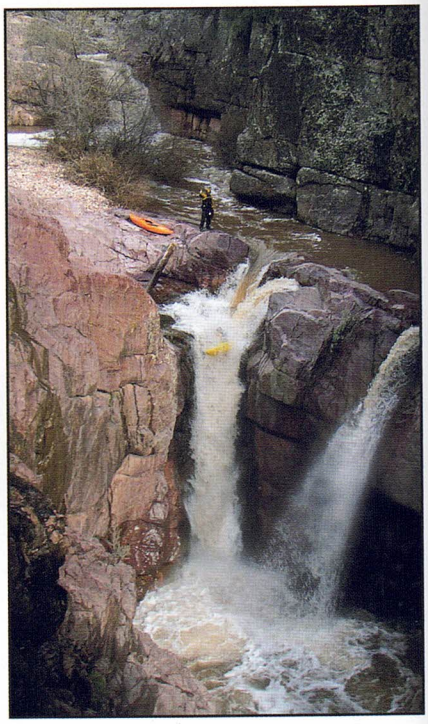
is the definition of pool-drop and though scouting should be possible at almost all runnable levels (low), portaging and/or exiting the gorge may not be. This is committing slot canyon kayaking at its finest. Enter with caution.

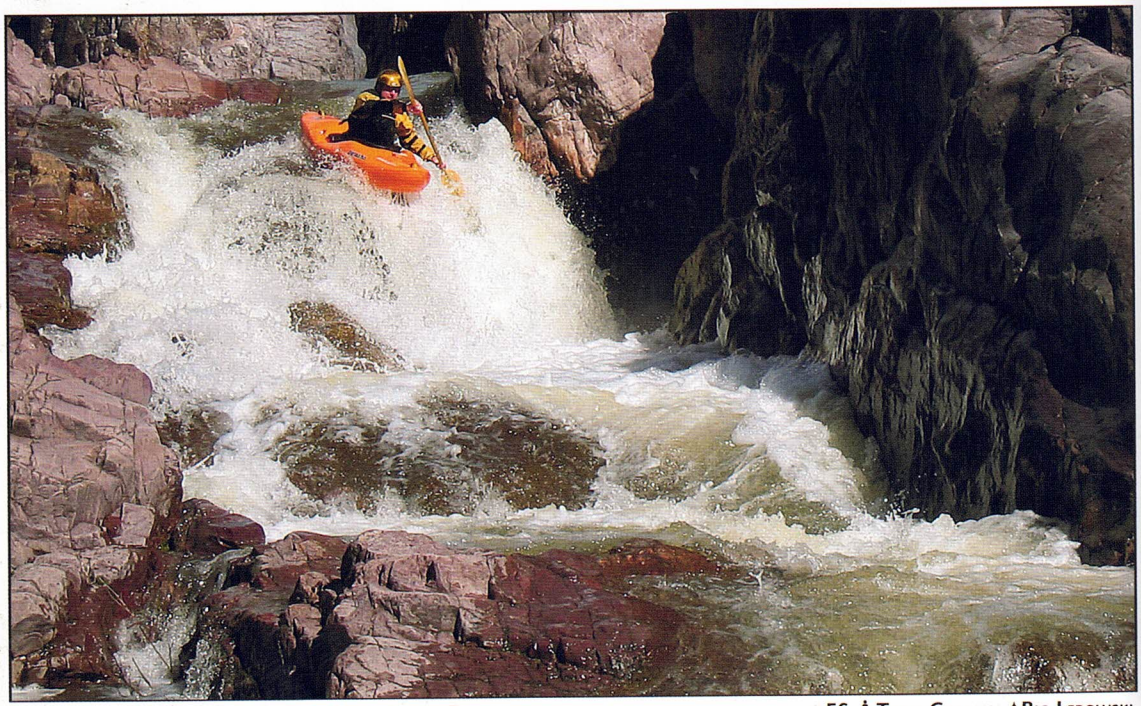
With the obligatory scare tactics out of the way you are off to an adventure full of a mind boggling amount of boofs, slot drops, waterfalls and boofs (did I mention the boofs?). I'll leave most of the drops as a surprise but at the crux of the gorge you must be willing to either run a glorious 15'-30'-20' combination, or to rappel whatever you don't want to run. Exiting the gorge at the crux has not been attempted to my knowledge, but looked "not-recommended" and would certainly require some extensive climbing and rope-work. The crux drops in order are titled Donnie's Drop (perfect plank to 15'), The Big Lebowski (30'+ boof-slide-vert), and The Little Lebowski (curling 20').

Below the crux there are a few more excellent drops and a couple of likely portages, the first of which is (NR) according to Kyle, who was routed into this drop blind. Easily spotted from a very narrow right bend, the walls here are shaped like an hour glass, making it look good to go. After experiencing the sides of his boat squeeze together in the narrow walls Kyle was eventually pushed into the lower room by the force of the water on the deck of his boat, where while submerged he was able to hand crawl out of the depths and into the deep pool downstream. Portage from the river left eddy, unless you have a really narrow boat.

Immediately below this, portage on river right where boat passing may be necessary. A tributary comes in from river right near the bottom of the gorge and affords an opportunity for an easy escape to the highway. A mile or so below the end of the gorge you meet up with Tonto Creek. An exciting, but short lived class IV gorge and three miles of easy paddling remains between you and the take-out at Bear Flat Campground.

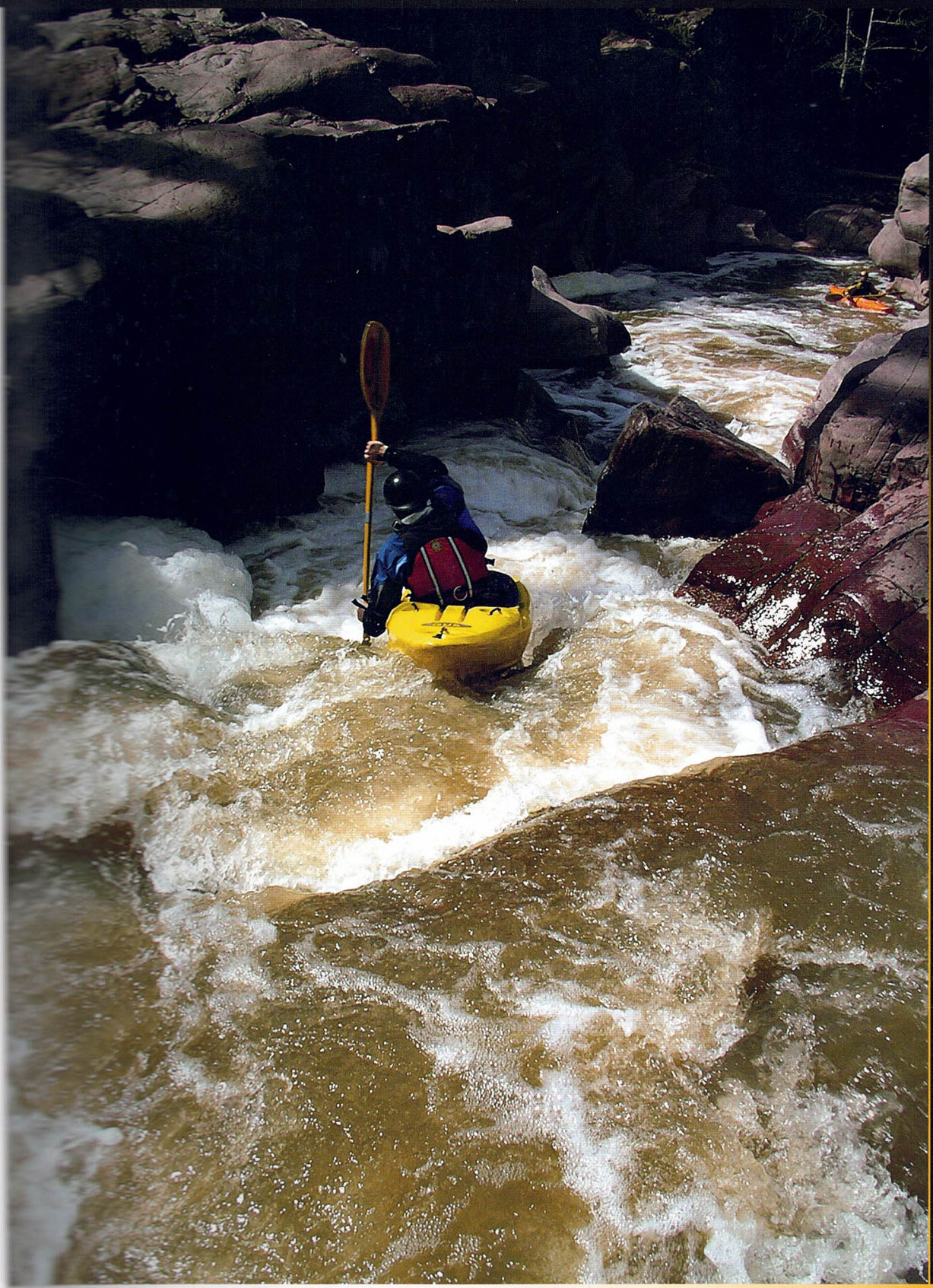
Directions: Take Highway 260 east from Payson twenty minutes to the put-in, Christopher Creek campground. If it's winter you may have to walk from the locked gate down to the river (not very far). To get to the take-out head east on 260 about fifteen minutes from Payson, go south (right) onto Bear Flat Rd (FR 405) five miles to Bear Flat CG.





Todd Gillman KM Final drop—The Beaver Picture

ES Todd Gillman Big Lebowski



Arizona • Christopher Creek

ES Todd Gillman FIRST DROP—Tyler's Little Bird

Tonto Creek

Tonto Creek has a massive catchment, collecting nearly every small creek draining the central zone of the Mogollon Rim. After heavy rains this relatively small creek can literally bust its banks and reach levels up to 60,000 cfs. This is not the type of flow you are looking for—however, the best way to catch this creek is on the backside of a sustained rainstorm. Tonto may also be boatable during early spring run-off in years of heavy desert snow. The creek crosses through a number of fascinating geologic layers and in the process chisels out a handful of significant gorges. Not surprisingly, these gorges are where the good boating is found. All of the runs on the Tonto flow through remote country and classic mid-elevation Arizona desert terrain. Translation—a diversity of cacti and other thorny vegetation, rattlesnakes, copperheads, mountain lions and bears, oh my.

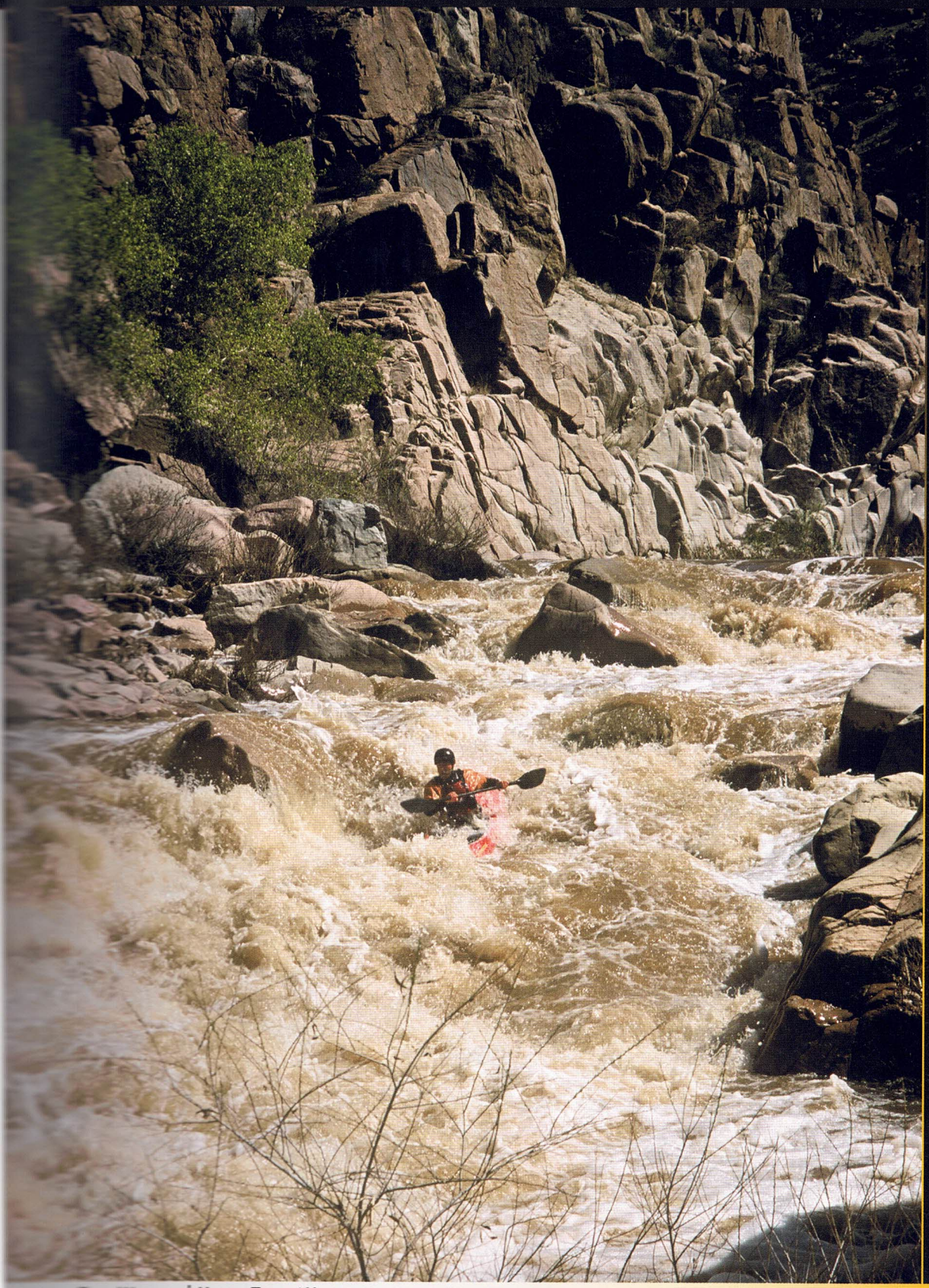
Upper Tonto

Crossing over the Tonto on Hwy 260 you can look down and scope the flow. Beginning at the Kohls Ranch Campground there are two miles of likely bony class II and III. When you reach the confluence with Christopher Creek the river should feel easily floatable or you may have put-on too low. On the other hand if it isn't bony above Christopher than you've probably gotten lucky and hit a juicy flow of chocolatey goodness. Not far below the confluence a horizon line appears a few moves into a deepening slot. This is what you came here for. A short and committing class IV gorge lurks below and is a kick if not clogged with wood or *too high*. You've got to make your own decision as to what that means. The scout and hopefully not the portage are on river left, the site of a rescue where we had to carry TG's boat over the steep dome

CFS	250<min<350<best
Class	III (IV)
Quality	★★
Gradient	110 fpm crux
Length	4 miles
Season	February, March, Rain
Gauge	Tonto Crk nr Roosevelt
Put-in	Kohls Ranch CG
Take-out	Bear Flat CG

Tyler Williams ♦Hellsgate Gorge

Not far below the confluence a horizon line appears a few moves into a deepening slot. This is what you came here for.



Tyler Williams Harlan Taney Hellsgate whitewater at a good flow

which creates the gorge. This initial hurt wing incident resulted from a missed seal launch of about six inches into a turbulent class zero eddy. This short gorge is really where all the action is, as below this gorge all that remains is approximately two more miles of un-interesting boating to the take-out at Bear Flat. For the expert paddler there is no reason to do this run unless it is at high flow, as running Christopher Creek will be topped off by routing this short gorge. For the enthusiastic intermediate boater, this run can provide a remote journey through scenic country and culminates with a committing but portageable class IV experience. Just the kind of thing an intermediate paddler needs to progress his or her skills.

Direction: To reach the Upper Tonto put-in from Payson, head east on Hwy 260 until you reach the Kohls Ranch CG. To get the take-out for the upper take Hwy 260 west from Kohls Ranch and turn left (south) onto FR 405A. Follow FR 405A to Bear Flat CG.

Hellsgate

CFS	700<optimal<1200
Class	V-
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	150 fpm action
Length	23 miles (overnight)
Season	February, March, Rain
Gauge	Tonto Crk nr Roosevelt
Put-in	Bear Flat CG
Take-out	Gisela Boat Beach

Putting in at Bear Flat will take you on an incredibly beautiful and demanding journey through the heart of the Hellsgate Wilderness Area. This run is best done in two to three days. This is a committing trip, as multiple narrow gorged slot sections exist within an already deep canyon. Though most of the whitewater on this run is not terribly difficult, expert skills are a pre-requisite, as complicated scouting and boxed in whitewater require a confident and competent team. Respect the wilderness and pack out whatever you pack in. Camping in this desolate wilderness is a treat and, besides some amazing and challenging sections of whitewater, it is the main allure of doing this run. Put away the ski gear, do a rain dance, and head to Arizona for some self-support class V in late February or early March.

Hellsgate Gorge is the first of the crux sections, and contains three drops. The action continues below Haigler Creek with The Mouse Trap and Black Flush. Saguaro forests appear in this area, and as the canyon walls and gradient recede you may notice signs of livestock as you enter an open area known as McDonald Pocket. Spring Creek marks the approximate half-way point, and the added flow should pad out the remaining three gorges. The Last Hurrah gorge is the finale, and includes a long, rowdy rapid and a 10' falls. Below there are a couple more class IV drops, and a few miles of mellow water before the Boat Beach take-out.

Directions: To reach the put-in for the Hellsgate run take Hwy 260 west from Kohls Ranch and turn left (south) onto FR 405A. Follow FR 405A to Bear Flat CG. To reach the take-out, follow Hwy 260 west to Payson and turn south onto Hwy 87. Drive Hwy 87 past the tiny berg of Rye and turn left (east) onto Gisela Rd (FR 417). Continue to Gisela and veer south on FR 493 to the edge of town. The take-out is the Boat Beach, aka Cottonwood Beach.

Box Canyon

CFS	200<min<500<best
Class	IV (IV+)<1000<V- (V)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	55 fpm
Length	4.7 miles
Season	February, March, Rain
Gauge	Tonto Crk nr Roosevelt
Put-in	Rye Creek
Take-out	FR 649

Putting on at Rye Creek the whitewater is not difficult, however there are a few barbwire fences to negotiate or portage before you meet up with the Tonto. Rye Creek dumps into a scenic box canyon with class III-IV whitewater at moderate levels. As with the rest of the runs on Tonto Creek, the difficulty can increase significantly during flood stage, a strange yet common occurrence just about everywhere (duh). This is the shortest and most accessible section of the Tonto and is therefore the most popular. I still wouldn't expect to see many (any) other boaters here unless a runnable level has been sustained for more than a few days. This is a nice intermediate creek run with boulder garden rapids and one definite river-left scout about halfway through the run, just beyond some power lines that cross overhead. Continue on through the fun boulder rapids to the take-out.

Directions: To get to the Rye Creek put-in for the Tonto Box run take Hwy 87 south from Payson. Turn left onto Hwy 188 and go to Jake's Corner. At Jake's turn left onto FR 184 (dirt road that may not be marked). There is a gate that is not locked, just be sure to close it after passing through. This road ends at a parking area near Rye Creek. The take-out is located on an unmarked dirt road off of FR 649 2.7 miles south of Jake's Corner.

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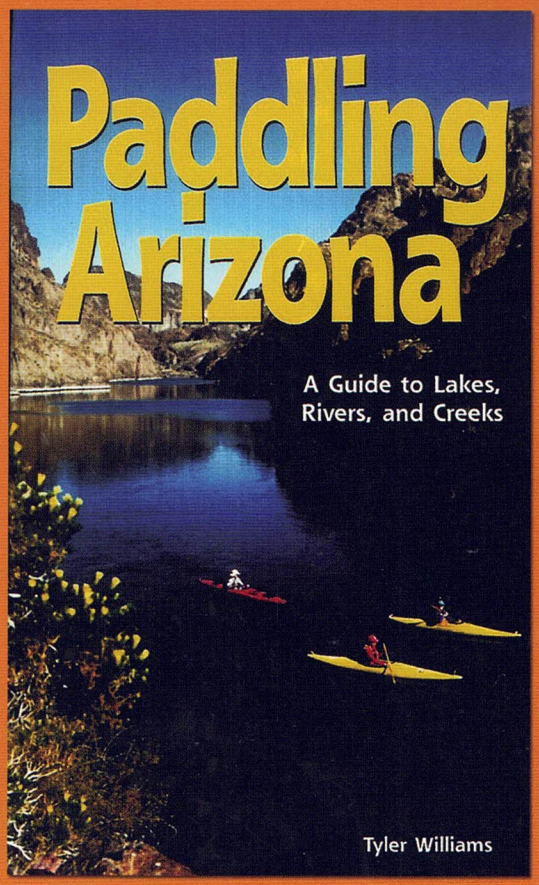

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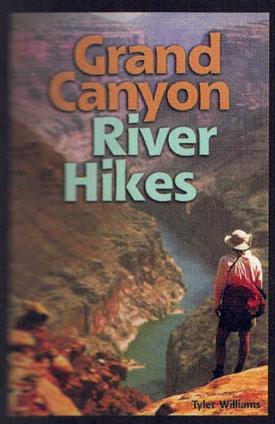

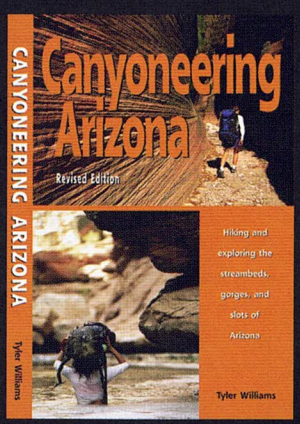

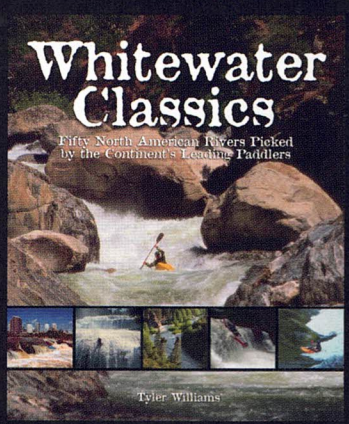

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East Verde

The East Verde is another Payson area classic. If the flows there were more consistent I would consider moving there! Mogollon Rim wilderness surrounds you on all sides and the East Verde slices through the Mazatal directly to the west. The East Verde contains very manageable whitewater with a few major exceptions in the form of tight gorges and heavy gradient. These spots afford the expert a chance to shine—or to crash and burn as many of these drops are very steep, very flow dependent and one or two remain to be run. If you feel the need to step up, this could be the place.

Park-and-Huck & Ellison Creek (no beta box)

Far upstream from the main runs on the East Verde, north of Hwy 87 and in the middle of a seemingly gradient-less pine forest lays a short and committing classic AZ huckers gorge. This rumble through the pink bedrock is of the same formation as the Pink Gorge downstream. The first rapid drops deep into the pink and flows into a deadly boulder sieve with a runnable tunnel on the right at low flows. If the water is high, problem solve your way to putting on directly above the next rapid Jetti (yes Jedi) Landing. Birthday Slide is next as the creek rolls around the corner to the confluence with Ellison Creek. This is a beautiful confluence as Ellison fights its way into the deep cut of the Birthday Slide. Ellison's final waterfall is a lengthy and complex slide that is awaiting a name. Before you name it take a look at the drop below the confluence. It has been run but its name is Novocaine Falls. Stopping above may or may not be possible and it consists of a big vertical into a tight and aerated narrows. Below Novocaine the gorge opens and the gradient lessens to a class III-IV degree until the take-out. A hike up Ellison from the Cold Springs Campground at the end of FR 420 (above the Second Crossing Campground on FR 199) may also provide some more slide and waterfall action. Test out your carrying system and make a day out of it.

Directions: To get to the take-out take Hwy 87 north from Payson to Houston Mesa Road (FR 199), turn right and follow it to a river right campsite just upstream of the first bridge crossing. Put in at the next bridge.

Day Stretch (Doll Baby)

The East Verde collects steam as it crosses under Hwy 87 and begins a furious incision through the granite. Well actually it traverses a riverside neighborhood first. Keep your mind off of owning one of these homes as you're going to need to focus. The crux lurks in the first series just downstream. A pink granite ledge marks the first scout. Get a good boof here to boost your confidence. Magical Mushroom Forest (V) is next. Then the big series titled The Pink Gorge. The first drop has a pushy entrance into heavy hydraulic forces. Scout and/or portage right. A sliding waterfall named Chunchee Falls is the best drop of The Pink and is followed by a heinous slot that may have a line at high water but has always been portaged. Bop through some class IV as the gorge walls retreat.

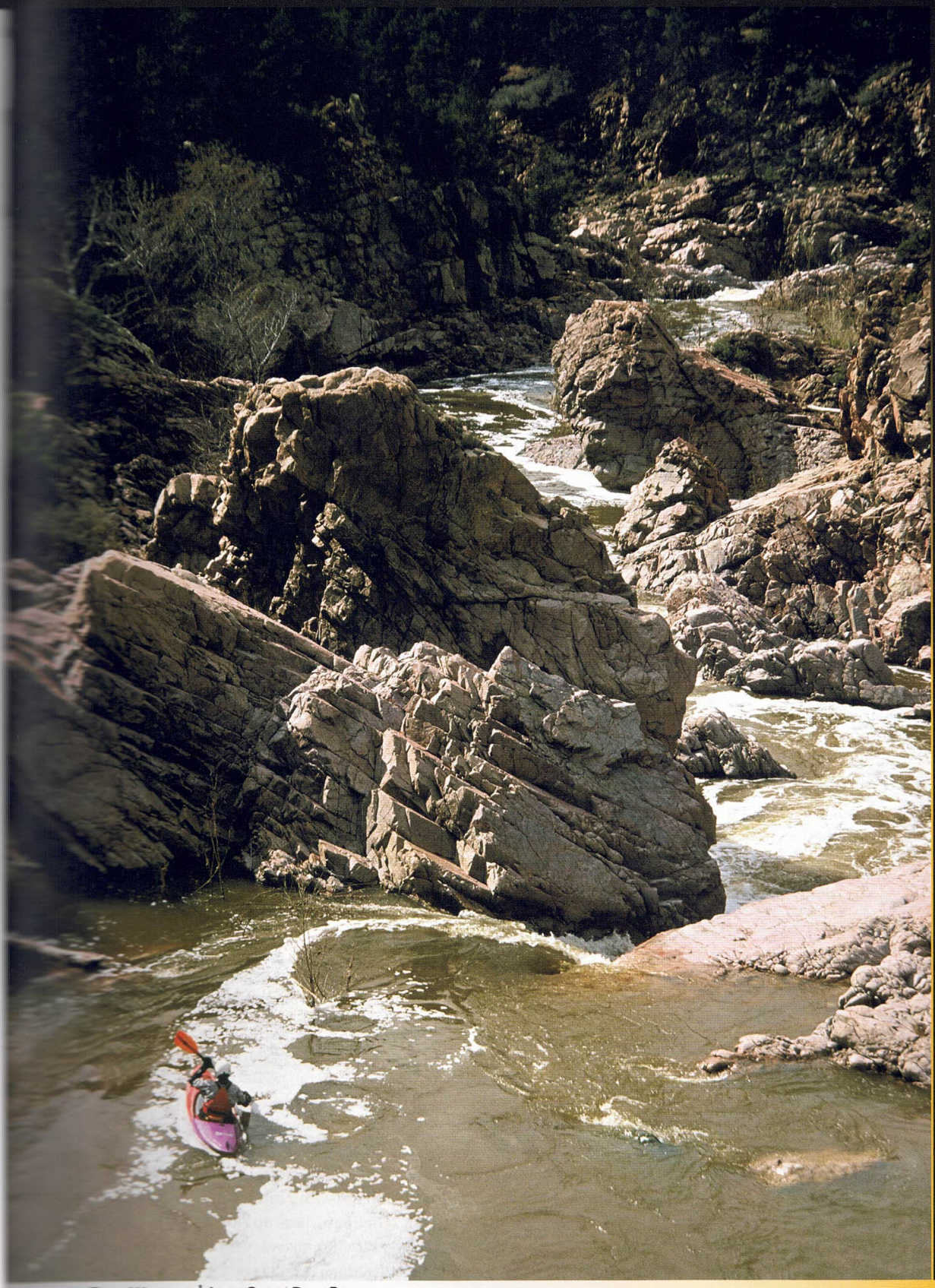
The whitewater scales down but is fun for the next few miles before mellowing completely. Charge through this section. This is a long day run and beers warm fast in the Arizona sun. If your palate is dry or the sun is setting, there is a time saving oxbow cut that circumvents the final sketchy Tapeats Sandstone gorge. If you need it, look for the trail below a few grey granite bedrock class IV rapids, and where some prominent sandstone cliffs first come into view on river left. The entrance rapids to the sandstone gorge are often portaged. The middle two rapids have a flat spell between them, and can be run. Directly below, another sieve portage or two remain in the sandstone formation before the quality grey bedrock and another short section of entertaining whitewater (IV/V) return. The gradient ends, the sun begins to set, and just before dusk you are passing the Doll Baby Ranch and nearing the take-out. Hopefully the cooler has ice.

CFS	200<min 300<optimal<600
Class	IV (Vs)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	120 fpm max
Length	18 miles
Season	February, March, Rain
Gauge	East Verde nr Childs
Put-in	Hwy 87 bridge
Take-out	LF Ranch Rd

Directions: The Doll Baby put-in is at the Hwy 87 bridge, north of Payson. The access below the Baby Doll Ranch is found by taking Main St. west off Hwy 87 in Payson. Main turns into FR 406 (LF Ranch Rd) and eventually finds the river at a picnic/camp area approximately 12 miles from Payson.

ES Todd Gillman Cacti

Mogollon Rim wilderness surrounds you on all sides as the East Verde slices through the Mazatal west of Payson.



Tyler Williams John Govi Doll Baby

East Verde & Fossil Creek

East Verde Wilderness Run (no beta box)

The shuttle on this two to three day wilderness trip is ridiculously long, but worth it. Combining it with the run above Baby Doll Ranch is the preferred option making the shuttle shorter and the trip on the water longer. A proverbial no brainer.

The East Verde below Doll Baby is a bush brawl through a gradient-less, braided stream before finding the relief of class III below the Pine Creek confluence. Things widen and flatten again and you may question the legitimacy of this run before the next horizon line appears. Consistent class III and IV pool drop defines the best whitewater of this 16-mile wilderness section. Keep your eyes open as wildlife frequent this relatively open and majestic canyon. When the whitewater ends a push to the Verde is inevitable. A long (24 mile) high water float weaves through the Wet Bottom Mesa and quintessential Sonoran wilderness and eventually ends at either Sheep Bridge or the Horseshoe Dam.

Directions: Put in at Doll Baby Ranch found by taking Main St. west off Hwy 87 in Payson. Main turns into FR 406 (LF Ranch Rd) and eventually finds the river at a picnic and campground area approximately 12 miles from Payson. Sheep Bridge is on the long and rough Bloody Basin Rd (FR 269) off of I-17 south of Cordes Junction. Bloody Basin Rd crosses right through the Agua Fria and therefore might be impassible when the Agua Fria is high (over 100 cfs at the Mayer gauge). The Horseshoe Dam take-out is at the boat ramp near the dam on the south side of the reservoir in Carefree.

CFS	300<min 500<optimal<1000
Class	IV
Quality	★★★
Gradient	55 fpm
Length	44 miles (overnight)
Season	Jan, Feb, March
Gauge	East Verde nr Childs
Put-in	Baby Doll Ranch
Take-out	Horseshoe Dam

Fossil Creek

In 1910 a group of engineers got together and built a hydro-electric plant in Childs. Childs is a lonely outpost resting at the bottom of the Verde River Valley with scenery straight out of the AZ commune in Easy Rider. Now at this point you may be asking yourself, "Hydropower? In Arizona?" Well, this was *back in the day*. What's more they had found a secret year round stash of water in a nearby drainage—Fossil Creek. Fossil Springs, the main feeder to the creek provided a continual water supply which they easily diverted through a flume to the generators in Childs. Voila, they used the head from the downhill flume to create hydro-power for the mining boom.

The group maintained its claim to the Fossil Creek water for nearly a century, leaving a de-watered ecosystem in exchange for only a modest sum of power production. After a ten year debate, the engineers pulled their claim and in 2005 the natural flow was allowed back into the main channel. The restoration of flows to Fossil Creek is a wonderful success for a state that has lost over 90% of its perennial streams. It seems that it is worth more as a recreational resource than it is as a source of hydro-power. With the return of the crystal clear, year round water, this stream is currently up for Wild and Scenic designation.

The travertine spring feeding Fossil Creek discharges an amazing 43-48 cfs year round. I know, I know, 43 cfs? Seems questionable, but there are some great drops in there. If you're into hydrology you'll know that travertine equals waterfalls.

There are three distinct sections to this stream—the upper, middle and lower. All of the sections vary in geology and travertine deposition, both of which alter the type of rapids you will encounter. The lower is full of boulder garden sieves that have formed because of the loose conglomerate. You will be disappointed with the base flow of 43 cfs. The scenery is spectacular regardless of the flow, and if you find the creek with some bonus cfs, the lower is well worth the journey. The middle is where it's at—granite, gradient over 220 fpm and high travertine deposition rates. The upper is sweet too, but it needs extra water from runoff as well. In 2007 Cody Howard repelled in to Fossil Creek Falls and cleaned the 40'er (both of wood and during the first D) that drops to the right of the diversion dam.

CFS	43<usual<48<high
Class	IV-<100<IV (V-)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	185 fpm
Length	7.6 miles (variable)
Season	year round
Gauge	East Verde nr Childs
Put-in	Baby Doll Ranch
Take-out	Horseshoe Dam

Directions: The middle is basically a hike-and-huck. Find Strawberry (northwest of Payson) and follow Fossil Creek Rd (FR 708) to the creek. Hike up from here. We usually put in just above an 8' slide to 20' vert. The upper can be accessed via this same hike or with a shuttle from the Fossil Springs Trailhead, back up FR 708. The lower begins at Irving and ends with a brutal hike-out up Deadman Mesa Trail.

THE TRAVERTINE SPRING FEEDING FOSSIL CREEK DISCHARGES AN AMAZING 43-48 CFS YEAR ROUND. SEEMS QUESTIONABLE, BUT THERE ARE SOME GREAT DROPS IN THERE.

JARRETT VON CZIESCH 🚶 MIKE MORELAND 💧TRAVERTINE VERT ON FOSSIL CREEK

Verde River

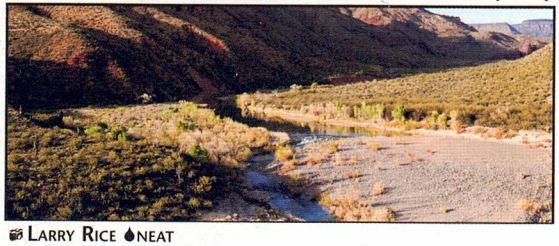
Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	150	300	1200	1800
Character	Wilderness only	Beasley good	play good	spf 60
Beasley Class	not running	III (IV)	III (IV)	III+ (IV)
Wild. Class	II	II (IIIs)	II (IIIs)	III+
Beas. Quality	not running	★★	★★★	★★★
Wild. Quality	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★
Gradient	20 fpm			
Remoteness	high			
Hitchability	poor			
Length	30 miles			
Season	February to April			
Gauge	Verde River near Camp Verde			
Put-in	Beasley Flat or Childs			
Take-out	Childs or Sheep Bridge			

The Verde is a low elevation desert river that runs a weaving north to south transect smack through the middle of Arizona's fabled central mountain wilderness areas. The best two sections of the Verde both flow through beautiful desert country but they are otherwise two very contrasting runs. The first is "the standard whitewater run of northern Arizona," while the second is a seldom made wilderness float.

Beasley Flats

This section, along with the day run on the Salt, is where the majority of Arizonians get their whitewater fix. Besides the Grand Canyon these are the two most likely places for you to bump into your fellow boating brethren in this arid state. The character of this run changes significantly with flow, but it can, and does get boated at extremely low and high flows. The best whitewater of this run is found in the first few miles below Beasley Flats. A couple of significant rapids including Off the Wall and Verde Falls are interspersed with fun class II and III.

Not far below the falls the whitewater subsides and long pools are only occasionally interrupted by easy riffles. There is one more significant rapid about seven-miles in, titled Punk Rock, before a possible take-out a mile later at Gap Creek. This take-out requires a short, half mile, uphill carry to your vehicle which may be worth it if you've got a playboat. For the rafters, canoeists and anybody else with a heavy boat, finishing the run at Childs will be your best option. There is one good surf wave at high flows called Bushmans, just downstream of Gap Creek. With the proper motivation (an upstream hike) Bushmans can still be surfed even if planning a Gap Creek take-out. Riverside parking and the ruins of an early 20th century hot springs resort where you can still soak, but no more significant whitewater and a lengthy shuttle come with a take-out at Childs.



Larry Rice ♦NEAT

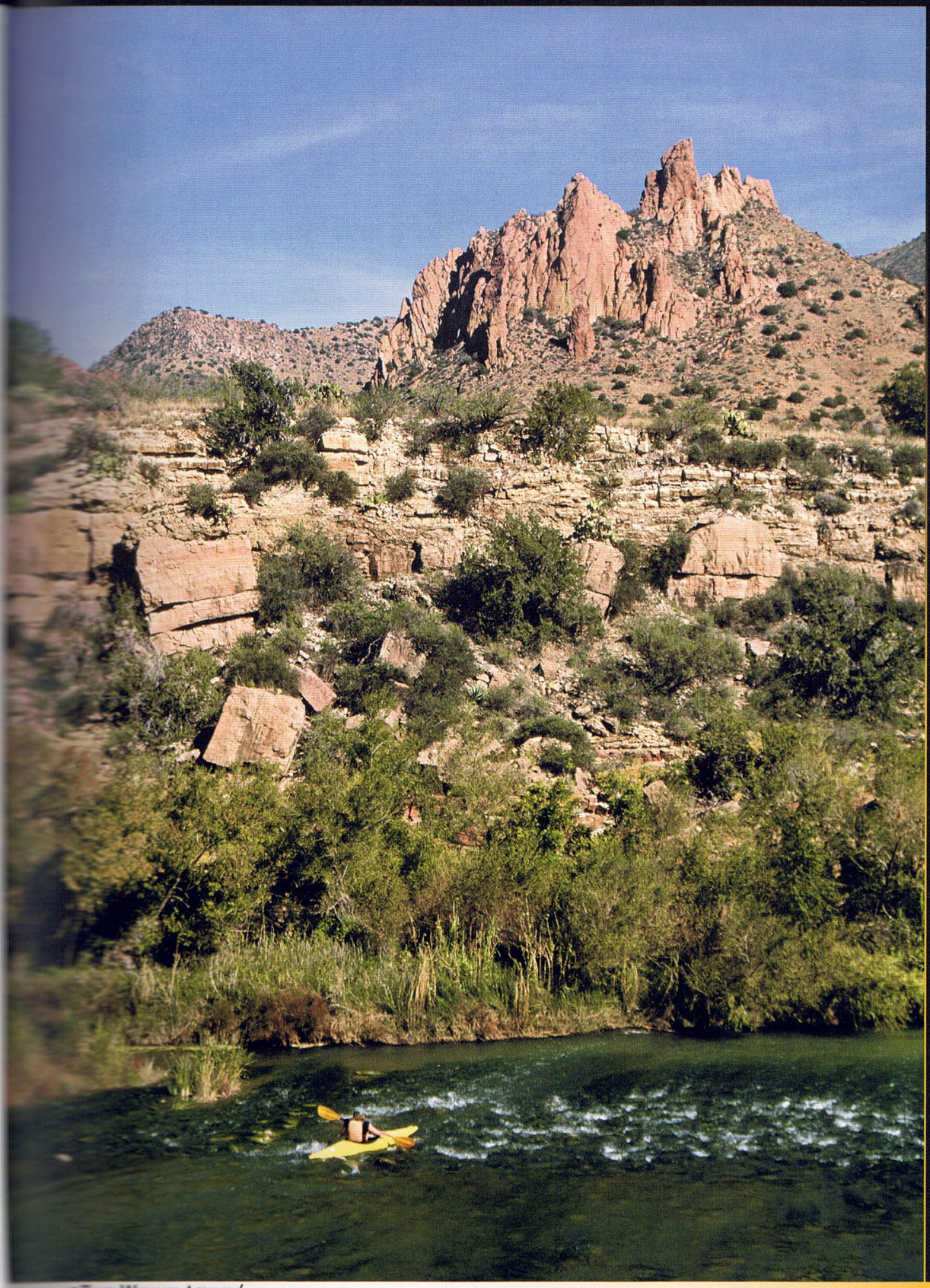
Wilderness Run (Childs to Horseshoe Reservoir)

Below Childs, the Verde River brings muddy lifeblood to the most northeastern arm of the vast and majestic Sonoran Desert. Home to such classic desert archetypes as the saguaro cactus, the puma and the road runner, the Verde is one of the quintessential Southwestern wilderness voyages. The greatest hazards to the successful navigation of this trip are the possibility of strainers (trees and/or previously pinned and abandoned canoes) in swift water, and the adventurous shuttle to the take-out. Enjoy the solitude but plan accordingly for this dry and desolate wilderness adventure.

Directions

Beasley Flat is reached by taking Salt Mine Rd (FR 574) south off of Hwy 260 in Camp Verde (river right at white bridge). Go 8.8 miles down Salt Mine Rd and turn left for 2.4 miles to Beasley Flat. Gap Creek is many bumpy miles further south on Salt Mine Rd from the Beasley turn. Childs is reached via an exit off of Hwy 260, south onto FR 708 and by then heading right on to FR 502. The take-out for the wilderness run is at Sheep Bridge or Horseshoe Dam detailed in the East Verde description.

The Verde is a low elevation desert river, that runs a weaving north to south transect smack through the middle of Arizona's fabled central mountain wilderness.



Arizona • Verde River

Agua Fria

CFS	100<min 300<optimal<500
Class	V
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	160 fpm max
Length	17 miles
Season	Heavy Rain
Gauge	Aqua Fria nr Mayer
Put-in	Bloody Basin Rd
Take-out	Black Canyon City

I consider the Agua Fria to be the best day run in Arizona. The river snakes through a beautiful desert canyon covered in Saguaro cactus. The shuttle is easy. Trees and strainers, though present, are less of a hazard than on most Arizona rivers. On top of all this, the Agua Fria has a California-esque riverbed of polished granite that forms complex and fun whitewater.

Not that you'll be seeing any of this whitewater for the first couple miles of the run. Things start out flat and shallow—your warm-up strokes will be made avoiding gravel bars and the occasional nest of willow trees. The action starts about three miles below the put-in with some class III boulder gardens. At four miles, the first saguaro cactus appears, along with class IV rapids.

There are two significant drops here that are a good sampling of what is to come. The first is a short double drop with a launchpad in the left channel. The other is a broad ledge usually run down the right chutes.

Four and a half miles in, Badger Spring Wash enters on the right. Look for this trickling side creek at a pool just before the river turns left. This is a good place to regroup and assess things, because it is your last easy option for hiking out. It is a simple 0.5 mile walk up the sandy (beware of quicksand and mud) wash to a parking area, and another mile from here to the freeway. When short on time, one can also put in here.

Below Badger Spring Wash, the Agua Fria begins its turbulent, boulder-choked journey off Black Mesa to the desert floor. Most of the rapids are class IV and IV+, but several class V's seem to be perfectly placed to keep you on your toes. A class V boater will have a great time on this run. An adventurous class IV boater will be gripped.

The first rapid of note below Badger Spring Wash is Maelstrom, where a steep glassy tongue leads into an agitated mess of converging currents. Dugald's Mystery Ledge is the next biggie. On my first run in 1993, BJ Boyle and I watched in amazement as Dugald Bremner disappeared in a hole here for a full second before surfacing and paddling out. This rapid takes higher flows to become runnable. It is usually the one mandatory portage on the run. A mile farther is Rail Slide—a complex class V that sometimes sends paddlers sliding down a fin of granite against the right wall. Just after the canyon makes a 90 degree right turn at Perry Tank Creek, you'll arrive at a 20' waterfall with a boulder sitting just beyond the backwash at its base.

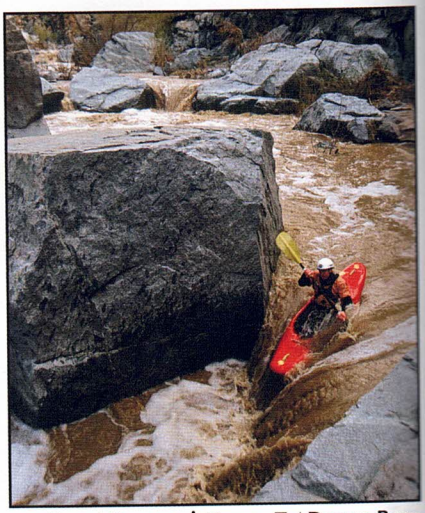
Less than a half mile below the falls is Double Boof—you'll know when you're there. I always breathe a little easier once past Double Boof, even though three miles of chutes, slides, slots and rocks remain. The more memorable drops are Poop Chute (where a river right channel barely wider than a kayak avoids the hole of the main stream), and Idiot Proof Boof, featuring a perfect diving board launchpad. When you sense things starting to mellow, brace yourself for a final flurry of action. The big rapid down here is Low Blood Sugar, named after an ill-advised attempt to finish the canyon without a lunch break. Run correctly, it requires some rock dancing at the top before zooming around a blind corner to the left of a giant boulder.

Below Low Blood Sugar, things soon drop off to class III and you are officially on the paddle out. Wake up calls come in the form of rollicking class III rapids (and one class IV) but these only occasionally punctuate the drudgery of the long flat pools. Paddling through the broad lower canyon in the golden afternoon light, you'll be glad you got an early start. A 9:00 A.M. launch is appropriate for this run. A noon put-in on the Agua Fria is likely to get you be-nighted.

If you are behind schedule, there are some options. Rather than facing an I-17 hitchike in the dark, we once took out at the side canyon leading to the Sunset Point rest area. There is a trail here, but it is a tough and muddy 3 miles to the freeway.

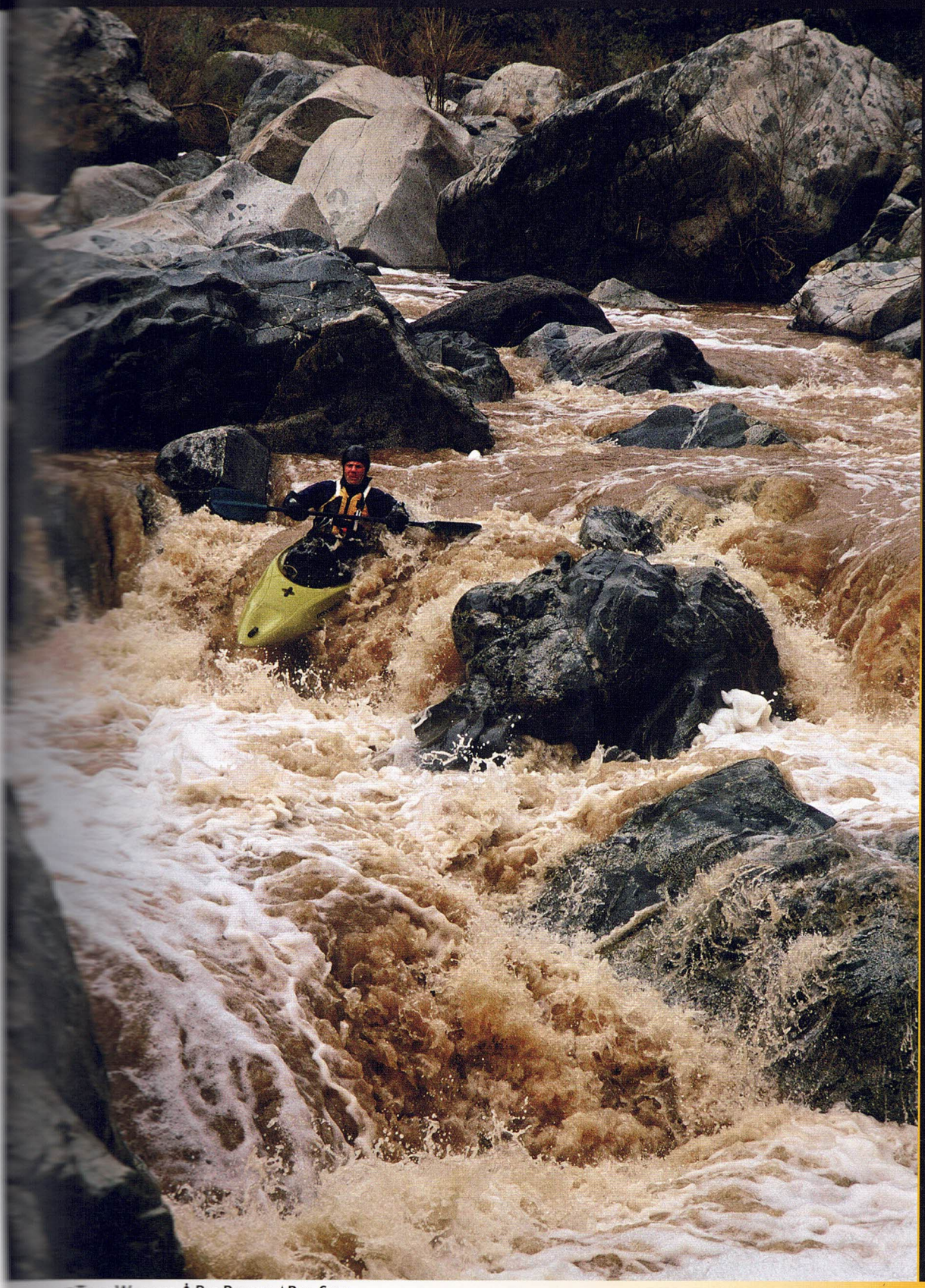
Directions: The take-out is in Black Canyon City, where the main road crosses the river. To get here, take exit #244 off I-17 at Black Canyon City and head southeast from the freeway for 0.8 miles, then left on Coldwater Canyon Road. Drive upstream to the take-out 1.8 miles from the Coldwater Canyon turn. For the put-in, return to I-17 and head up the hill to Bloody Basin Road—exit #259. Take Bloody Basin Road 5.3 miles to the Agua Fria.

-Tyler Williams



TYLER WILLIAMS HARLAN T DOUBLE BOOF

The river snakes through a desert canyon covered in Saguaro cactus and guards a California-esque riverbed of polished granite. Tyler Williams all-time favorite.

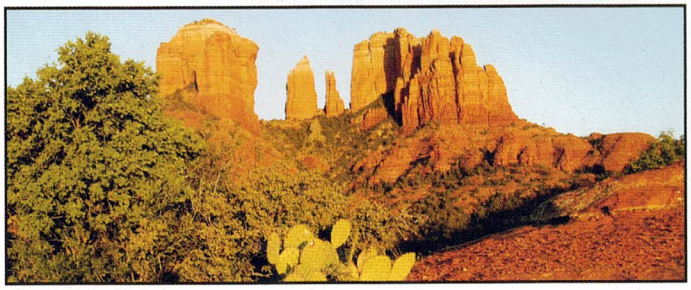


Arizona • Agua Fria

Tyler Williams Pat Phillips Rail Slide

Oak Creek

Sedona is a world famous destination for the world famous and Oak Creek flows right through town. Many groups that have inhabited the area at one time or another consider the Sedona area to be a spiritual vortex, if you will. The vibe in town is weird, but that doesn't mean that these healing vortices cannot be tapped in the natural areas surrounding Sedona. For those in the Sedona and Flagstaff area, these Oak Creek runs make up the staple of a sometimes meager paddling diet. Wilderness boaters may find a more spiritual journey on the multi-day trips of the Verde, East Verde or Tonto, but really the scenery around Sedona is hard to beat. If sandstone cliffs are your thing than Sedona might just be your holyland. Sedona began 350 million years ago. That's how long it took for nature to form the brilliant red rocks by earth thrusts, changes in sea levels and erosion forces such as flash floods. The first human inhabitants wondered in at least 1000 years ago, when the Native Americans we know as Sinagua lived the good life under the Arizona sun.



George Swan ♦Cathedral Rock, Sedona

Slide Rock Run

This is the best section of advanced whitewater on Oak Creek, but it takes a fair bit of rain to run. Class III-IV basalt boulder rapids make up the majority of the run with a few slides and class V exceptions. Halfway rapid (below the Halfway parking area) marks the beginning of the toughest rapids. A short red rock gorge comes on you quickly and has a class V entrance that is easily scouted and/or portaged. Exiting the gorge is the run's namesake rapid, a long hoot of a bedrock slide. Lower Red Rock Slide is the best and most difficult drop on the run, and is followed by more class IV boulder gardens and possible strainers as you approach the Manzanita Campground.

Directions: To get to the Slide Rock Run take-out follow Hwy 89 north from Sedona to the Manzanita campground. The put-in is upstream at the Halfway Campground or for a slightly longer put on at Banjo Bill Campground. There is the steepest paddling on Oak Creek upstream of Banjo Bill and Don Hoel's cabins can serve as a put-in but there is a dangerous gate bridge that MUST be portaged halfway through this upper section, behind the Junipine Resort.

CFS	200<optimal<500
Class	V
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	140 fpm max
Length	3.5 miles, variable
Season	March, April
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Banjo Bill CG
Take-out	Manzanita CG

Indian Gardens

This is the short and sweet after work staple for local Sedona and Flagstaff area creekers. Wood, combined with sporadic high water flows can sometimes be a problem, but a check with the locals may reveal the current status. With its impressive deep toned red rock cliffs and entertaining basalt boulder gardens this is classic Arizona paddling. The whitewater is manageable, but strainers, and even boulders and channels are constantly shifting.

The creek splits below Indian Gardens and when it re-unites the rapids begin. The Trout Farm Bridge a few rapids into the run can be ducked at low water on the left, but is a portage at higher flows. Walk right. Rapids and possible scouts for wood continue to Pick Your Poison, a drop that often does not have a clean line. Grasshopper Falls is a fun five' boof. Downstream the river drops away from the road and falls through some good whitewater to Midgley Bridge Rapid. Midgley is a long bedrock slide with one nice-and-sticky and a couple of other nice and-playful hydraulics. Another possibly sticky hole follows before you enter Sedona, finding a few more rapids and the take-out at the bridge.

Directions: The Indian Gardens take-out is at the Hwy 179 crossing in Sedona. The put-in is at Indian Gardens on Hwy 89A. If the water looks low, putting on at Grasshopper point may be a better option as the creek is more channelized below this point.

CFS	200<min 400<optimal<600
Class	IV
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	75 fpm
Length	5 miles
Season	March, April
Gauge	Oak Creek nr Sedona
Put-in	Indian Gardens
Take-out	Sedona, Hwy 179

Sedona is a world famous destination for the world famous and Oak Creek flows straight though the center of town.

Tyler Williams Eric Christenson Grasshopper Boof, Indian Gardens

Oak Creek

Sedona to Red Rock Crossing

This is another short and sweet one. Though the whitewater is mild there are many strainers, requiring class III tree hazard dodging skills. Expert play boaters will have fun when the water is high, but there are few eddies. The ability to eddy out by grabbing a shrub is a good skill. If you've never heard of or practiced this technique, wait for lower water to make your descent. Near the take-out the best surf of the run is formed by multiple Supai ledges and comes complete with views of the beautiful Cathedral Rock Formation, otherwise known as The Lovers.

Directions: The put-in for the Sedona to Red Rock run is the Hwy 179 bridge. Take-out at the Red Rock State Park river right for a fee or find the Verde Valley School Rd off south Hwy 179, turn right and follow it to its end at a river left parking area.

CFS	300<min 600<optimal<800
Class	III
Quality	★★★
Gradient	50 fpm
Length	5 miles
Season	Feb, Mar, April
Gauge	Oak Crk @ Sedona
Put-in	Hwy 179 bridge
Take-out	Red Rock State Park

Dry Creek to Cornville (no beta box)

This area offers the best paddling of the lower Oak Creek stretches. Basalt and conglomerate boulders form the class III or below rapids in a scenic desert canyon. Birdlife is abundant and a good play hole forms at the take-out during flows greater than 700 cfs, so bring the playboat to work on your McNasty Helix combo. Though not as challenging as the runs above and around Sedona, the lower stretches of Oak Creek offer up a greater chance for solitude and possibly the door to the spiritual vortex that you've been longing for.

Directions: The put-in for Red Rock to Page Springs is the same as above. The take-out is just north of Page Springs on FR 134.

BRAD MODESITT ♦POPPIES IN BLOOM

Arizona • Oak Creek

Tyler Williams • surviving Slide Rock

Santa Maria

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	300	500	750	900
Character	polished	white	granite	go
Class	IV (Vs)	IV (Vs)	IV+ (Vs)	V- (Vs)
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	100 fpm max, 50 fpm average			
Remoteness	medium-high			
Hitchability	poor			
Length	6 miles and 6 miles			
Season	February, March			
Gauge	Santa Maria near Bagdad			
Upr Riv Access	Sycamore Wash to Hwy 96 bridge			
Lwr Riv Access	A Mess to Hwy 93 bridge			

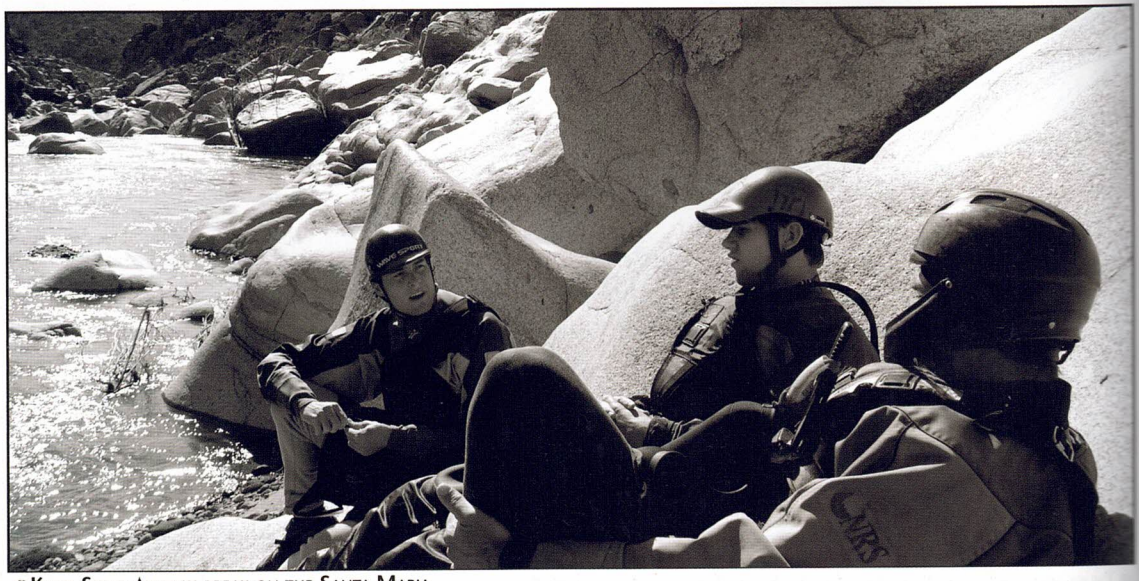
The Santa Maria is truly a rumbling of a river directly through the bedrock. Despite barely being able to make out the course of this saintly river on my gazetteer, Lisa Gelczis, Glen Rink, and Tyler Williams ventured to the western flank of AZ in February of 1998 to explore the Santa Maria's whitewater possibilities, They were rewarded with a couple of fantastic first descents. After further research they discovered that the Santa Maria tends to have much more sustained flows than other Arizona rivers once its basin has been saturated. What all this means to you is that, in a good year, you've got a good possibility of catching two quality runs on the Santa Maria, and all you need is the proverbial cajones to make the journey.

Upper Box

From the put-in at Chimney Rock, a few short warm-up strokes lead almost immediately into the waiting arms of a California-esque granite gorge. The first few rapids ease from class III into class IV, but shortly thereafter turn to a consistent barrage of demanding pool drop action over the next few miles. The steepest ¼ mile of the run comes near the end of the gorge and can quickly turn into class V at higher water levels. The end of this series is marked by 7' West. A rapid coined thus by Williams because it reminded him of the Chattooga River's 7' Falls in Georgia. Unlike the Chattooga's 7', boof left to avoid a rock at the base on the right. Below 7' there is one more rapid of note, Magnet, before you completely exit the first gorge. The river then meanders through scenic open desert country for a mile or more before entering a short class III second gorge. Below this there is a mile of flatwater to the highway.

Lower Box

The lower box is the more commonly run section of the two as it contains quality granite boulder rapids that



KATIE SELBY ♦LUNCH BREAK ON THE SANTA MARIA

Lisa Gelczis, Glen Rink, and Tyler Williams ventured to the western flank of AZ in February of 1998 to explore the Santa Maria's whitewater possibilities, and were heavily rewarded.

Tyler Williams 🚶 Lisa Gelczis 💧 boat scouting on the first descent

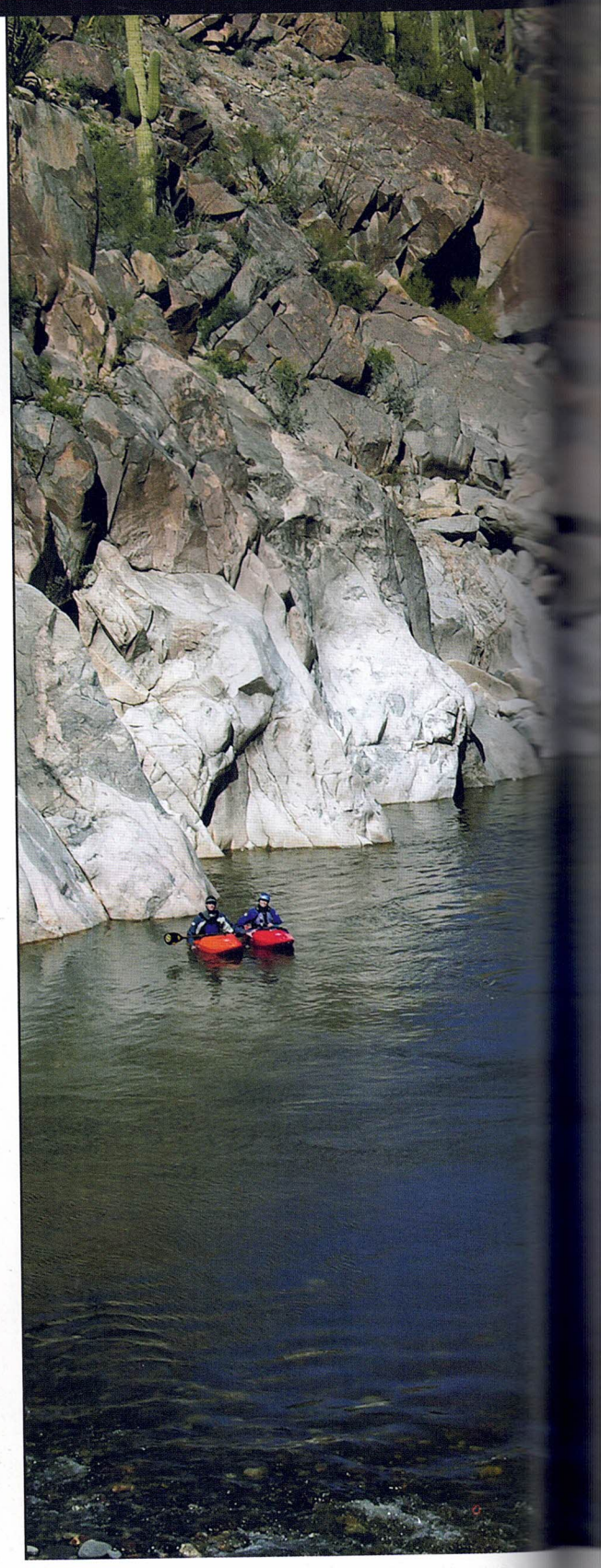
remain fun at a variety of flow levels. Tyler Williams reports that he has run this section as high as 1,700 cfs and that the river remained predominantly class IV as numerous sneak lines opened up. At low water the rapids are still enjoyable as the gradient becomes more defined and the pools become longer.

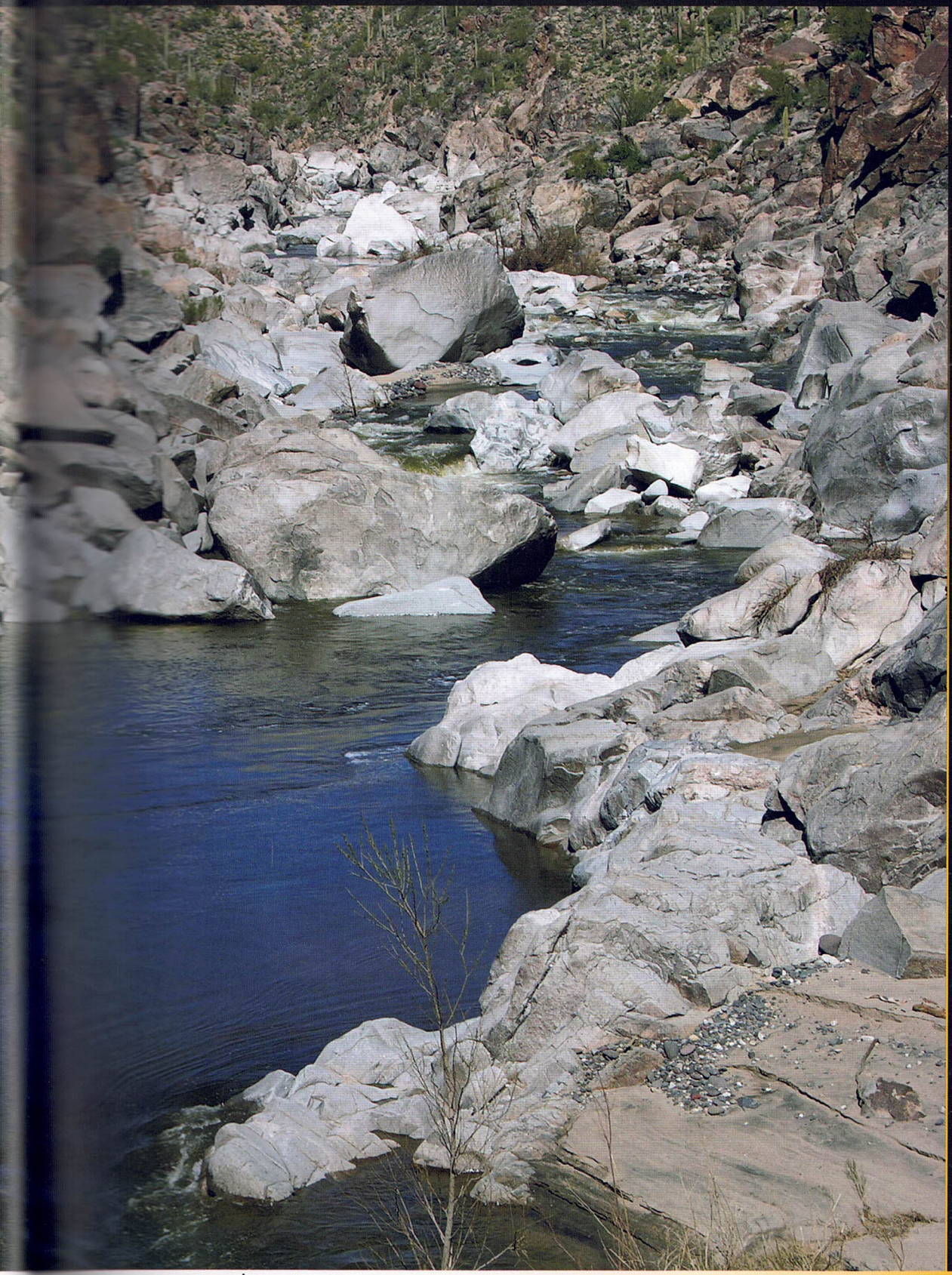
Some desert cruising is necessary to reach the whitewater from the put-in (read: de-channelized sandbar dodging). Some mild waves and ripples are the only warm-up before Entrance Rapid, a double drop with a live cottonwood tree blocking the right channel—a distinctly Arizonian hazard. Directly following is a narrow sluice drop that gets downright nasty at in-between flows where the hole is stomping and the sneak lines have not opened up yet. Some easy floating leads to a few more significant drops and some evenly spaced class III. When things begin to look like they are getting tight and steep—they are! Back straight, body cocked, get ready to stomp some boofs. A series of IV+ drops lands you in an intimate granite gorge. At higher flows these drops blend together and are a notch up on the scale (V-). Below here the rapids become pool drop but remain constant as you reach the finale, LB's Sneak (V). Below LB's the gradient completely flattens. Either enjoy the scenic float or make a mile and a half flatwater sprint to get to your cold cervezas faster.

Directions

For the Upper Box the take-out is off of Hwy 96 bridge over the Santa Maria, west of Kirkland. To get to the put-in go 3.1 miles northwest on Hwy 96 and turn right onto a dirt road with an open-range oven within view of the road. Four wheel drive is a good idea for this road and bear right at any forks. From the highway the total drive to the Santa Maria is 5.5 miles. You will follow a small drainage uphill before finding the Sycamore Wash and driving down it through a few tough creek crossings to the river.

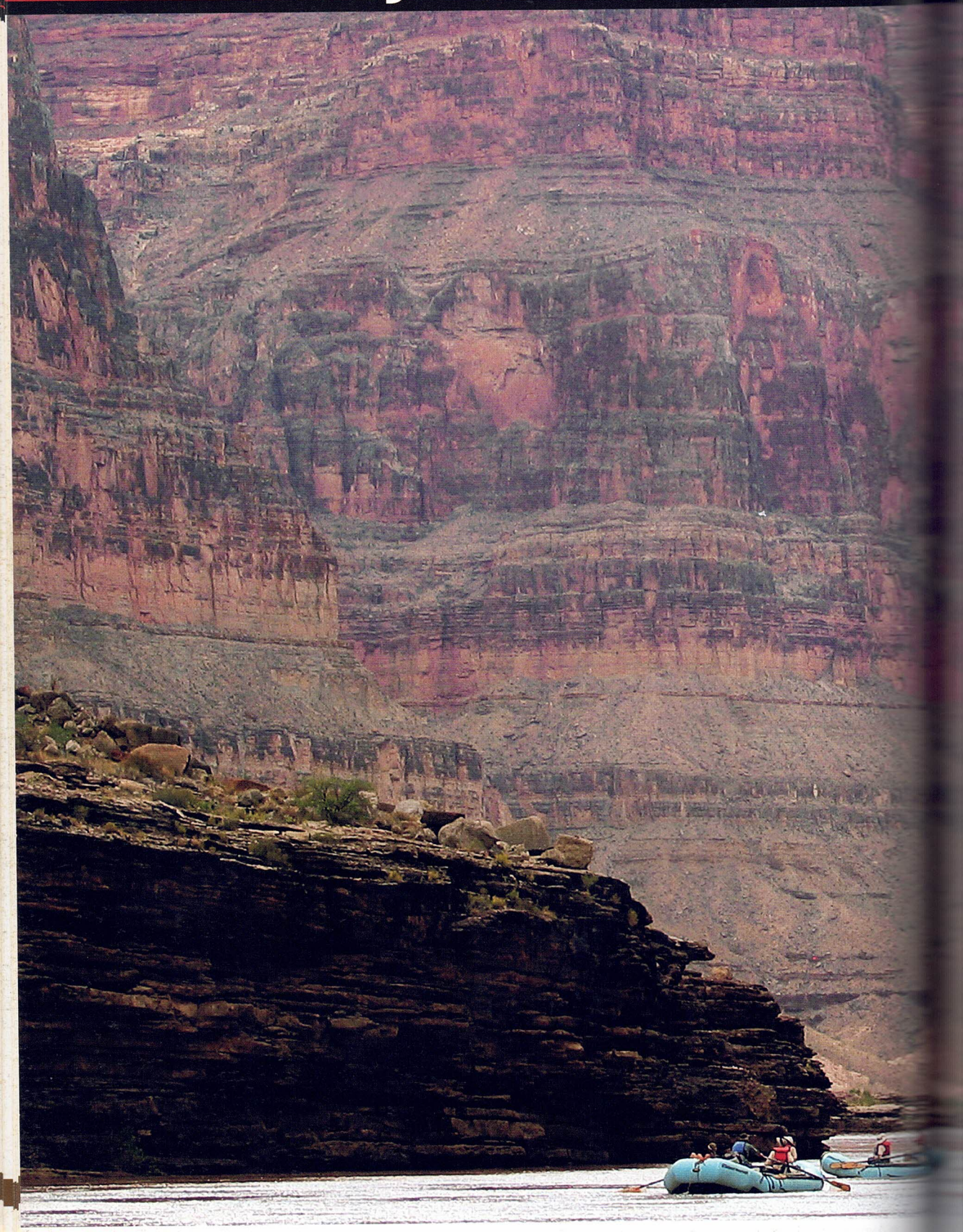
The take-out for the Lower Box run is river left of the Hwy 93 bridge crossing. The put-in access is dicey and is complicated by private land but follow the dirt road that goes upstream for at least eight miles. Please be courteous if you run into any local ranchers and ask politely to gain access to the river. Explain that you will launching and will then be gone downstream quickly. There are a few different places where you can make your way to the river but the easiest access seems to be approximately two miles north of where the road turns into the valley above the gorge. One and half miles beyond the Little Maria turn left onto a short dirt road that leads a few hundred yards closer to the river and park. Gear up and grab shoulder your boat a short ways to the river.





@Andre Spino Smith 🚶 Katie Selby & Jed Selby 💧amongst Saguaros and rock

Grand Canyon



Bruno Lutz Lutz Engagement Party Grapevine Creek

"THE RIVER TRIP THAT ALL OTHER RIVER TRIPS ARE MEASURED AGAINST."

-UNANIMOUS

September 7, 1867—James White is pulled from a battered cottonwood tree raft by Mormon settlers near Callville, Nevada. Starved, incoherent, badly sun-burnt and barely alive, White had apparently made the first descent of the Grand Canyon by a white-man—on accident. He put on the swollen river with one other man, in an effort to escape Native Americans who had attacked his party, near the San Juan River. This miraculous tale of survival comes only from White's much disputed personal account—since everyone knows that John Wesley Powell made the first descent in 1869, including an elaborate geographic and geologic report to the Smithsonian Institution. Or did he? Powell publicly denounced James White's tale as a fabrication, but there is evidence that news articles publicizing White's story had actually inspired Powell's quest to float into the unknown.

Most subsequent river runners agreed with Powell, White's alleged trip was impossible. He was either too dazed and confused to remember his entry point, or he was a liar. In any event, there's no way he could have survived a trip down the Grand Canyon, without supplies, on a raft made out of a couple of driftwood logs. Or could he have? The details of White's journey and what he saw are limited, though this comes as no surprise considering he was half-dead when he flushed out the other side of the big canyon. A few poignant observations however, are enough to make one wonder.

His descriptions of calm water followed by well spread rapids matches the geography of Glen Canyon (now buried under the ironically named Lake Powell) and that of the Grand Canyon downstream. He described one waterfall as, "a stream of water about as large as my body that was running through the solid rocks of the canyon about 75 feet above my head, and the clinging moss to the rocks made a beautiful sight. The beauty of it can not be described." Deer Creek Falls? Vasey's Paradise?

Alex Henes Bruno Lutz Crystal

CFS	4000<great
Class	IV
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	10 fpm, 35 fpm action
Length	230 miles (18-30 days)
Season	year round
Gauge	CO Riv nr Lees Ferry
Put-in	Lees Ferry
Take-out	Lake Mead

A lucky guess? White also spoke of being stuck in an eddy near the mouth of the Little Colorado for hours, unable to cross the boil line back into the main current. When the Little Colorado is at flood stage it forms a monster whirlpool eddy near the confluence and even competent Grand Canyon oarsman have had trouble exiting its swirling currents.

Multiple violent rapids, hours spent circling in eddies, being thrown from the raft several times a day, a companion who drowned when he washed off and was separated from the raft. Are these the details from someone who washed through the canyon by accident, or a mess of rather imaginative lies? No one questions that White was pulled from the river below the Grand Canyon, starved, sun-burnt, unable to stand, and barely clinging to life—all in all, pretty much in the condition you would expect of a man who had just escaped certain death only to face a big river in the midst of a desolate and inescapable canyon.

In *A River Running West* Donald Wooster writes, "If (White's trip) seems improbable, all other explanations are more improbable still."

White is mentioned in the journals kept by both Jack Sumner and George Bradley on the first Powell led trip and Powell himself must have seen Dr. Parry's write up of White's story in the Transactions of the St.

Louis Academy of Natural Science in 1868:

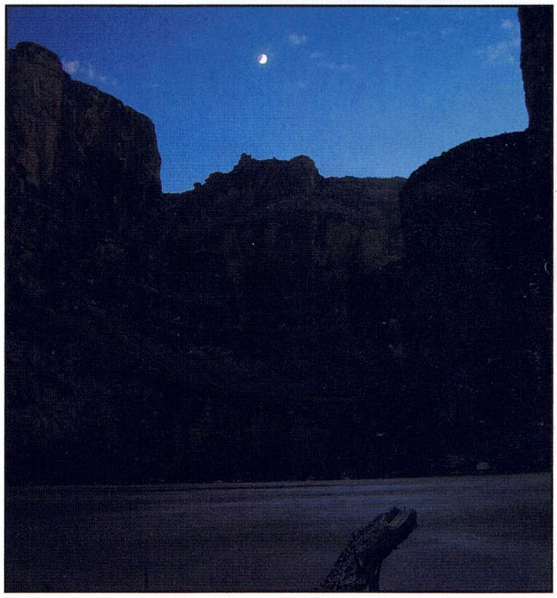
"The absence of any distinct cataract, or perpendicular falls, would seem to warrant the conclusion that in time of high water, by proper appliances in the way of boats, good, resolute oarsmen, and provisions secured in waterproof bags the same passage might be safely made, and the actual course of the river with its peculiar geological features properly determined"

Whoever made the first descent, John Wesley Powell's multiple trips down the Green and through the Grand Canyon were revolutionary. His early river explorations are some of the boldest to appear throughout history. You too can revel in the beauty of the Grand Canyon, which defies time, by heeding the sound advice of Dr. Parry and by patient negotiation of the new permit process.

New Permit Process: The Grand Canyon National Park initiated its first ever online lottery for river trips to raft the Colorado River in the park in 2006. The weighted lottery has two steps, a registration component and a lottery application component. Completion of the registration process allows entry to the lottery but does not require it. Registration is free and collects trip leader information. Anyone interested in a trip, now or in the future should register. Registrants will be notified of ongoing lottery details via email.

Once registered, the second step is to submit an online lottery application. The application costs $25, and allows hopeful rafters to choose up to five launch dates. River runners will need to decide the size of their group. The two choices for trip size include a small trip size of eight people or less, and a standard group size of 16 people or less.

For standard sized trips, 90 launches are listed in the motor-free winter months of October through March, while 91 launches are in the motorized summer season of April through September. None of the 48 small trips are available



in the motor-free season.

Applications are accepted until the third week of October annually. Permits are awarded shortly after the lottery is held. Be advised that winners will be immediately charged a substantial portion of the trip fees upon winning a date. A secondary lottery, for unclaimed and cancelled noncommercial river permits, will accept applications a month or so after the first lottery. During the new systems first year, a substantial amount of off-season dates become available, proving that the secondary lottery can be especially fruitful if you are willing to make a trip in November through February.

The on-line lottery registration and application, various other rules and regulations that are part of obtaining a Grand Permit, and also a detailed breakdown of how the weighted system works can be found at www.nps.go/grca/planyourvisit/weightedlottery.htm.

Chris Tracy ♦ An average view from camp

Bruno Lutz ♦ Cathy Jones, David Rindlaub, Mike "Small" Wood ♦ Hance Mile 76.5

Arkansas Drainage

EAST SIDE OF INDEPENDENCE PASS, LAKE CREEK HEADWATERS

Lake Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	130	200	450	650
Character	training wheels	bottom four only	minimum for top	empty parking lot
Class	V- (P)	V (P)	V (P, V+x3)	V (V+/NRs)
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	230 fpm Bottom Four, 120 fpm The Upper			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	can walk/jog Bottom Four, rest is good			
Length	1 mile for Bottom Four, 9 miles for entire run			
Season	April, May, June and with plumbing			
Gauge	Lake Creek above Twin Lakes—and it's usually predictable			
Put-in	upstream of the Lundberg House, or mm 72 or mm 69 at the very top			
Take-out	WIllis Gulch picnic area			

Nestled in the Collegiate Mountains on the east side of Independence Pass, Lake Creek is surrounded by lush mixed forests of stunning beauty. The creek has two distinct sections with overlapping put-ins and take-outs, depending on the water level. The Bottom Four have become the after-work class V classic for paddlers living in the Arkansas Valley, and despite the stigma, they are actually very manageable and fun at low flow. When deciding which section of Lake Creek to run check the levels closely, and know that the breakdown goes like this...

From 130-450cfs, run the Bottom Four only. At 400-700cfs, run from above NIMBY down for a warm-up, and then pick and choose what you want to run in the Bottom Four. Above 600cfs most mortals will want to run The Upper only, and take-out at Brains...or just bail on the entire run and go to the Clear Creek Ark, which will probably be at a great level.

Lake Creek, The Upper

Whether looking for a warm-up to a hair day, or just something scenic that avoids the crowds of the Ark, the upper 7.5-miles could be your savior. Multiple put-in and take-out options exist, and a few rapids dot the top of this run. Expect a few portages (Tombstone and Toaster), one super fun and quality drop when it isn't clogged with wood (NIMBY), and a bunch of class IV- wave trains.

Tombstone is the first drop, found two miles down from the Diversion Tunnel put-in, and contains an ugly sieve that often has wood issues to boot. Scout well.

Four miles into the run is NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard), which appears to be falsely named as the summer cabins along the river never seem to cause problems for scouting paddlers. The best scout is river left, and this eddy-hopping drop is the cleanest, longest, and hardest drop in the upper section. Watch for wood.

A couple miles downstream is Toaster Rapid, where paddlers have been getting burnt on constant changes to the river bed and wood situation. It's currently a mandatory portage, with a 10' high seal-launch where the river left boof used to be.

Watch for a sticky ledge drop below this that has a hidden horizon line, and requires a left side boof. From here the pace will pick up substantially, until it really picks up at Brains, one mile downstream.

Lake Creek Bottom Four

The Bottom Four consist of Brains, Paralyzer, Kiss Me, and Cauldron, which dot the bottom 2.5 miles of Lake Creek before it disappears into Twin Lakes. I recommend shuttle scouting Cauldron, and then scouting both Brains and Paralyzer prior to putting on. Although paddlers that know this section can route it in less than 15 minutes, virgins to the run should expect it to take at least an hour, and that's probably with a guide.

Put in directly above Brains, which at most levels requires a delayed boof charging hard right to avoid a sticky hole (the Brain, named for the large boil). The second hole is also big, but not usually a problem maker until flows get over 600. Avoid trouble here because Paralyzer is only 300 yards downstream.

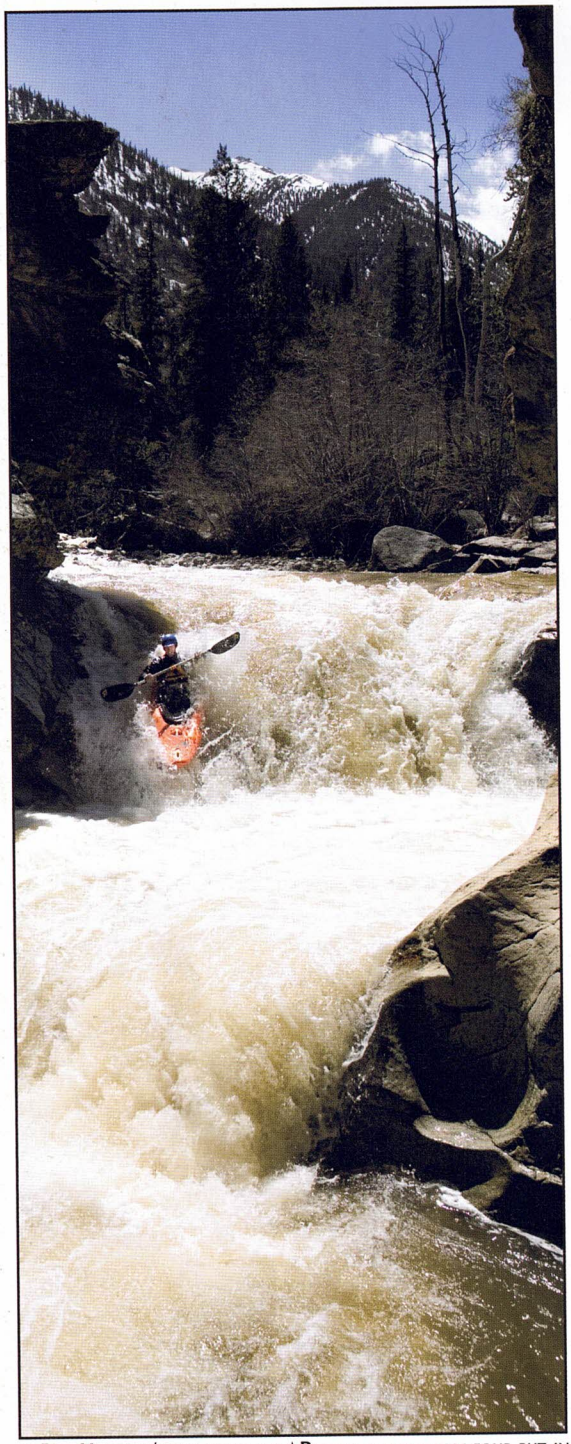
📷 Leif Embertson 🚶 Fred Zacherl 💧peacefulness below Kiss Me

The best creek boating in the Arkansas Valley. The LC can be everything from scrape-and-drop to super-gnar centerlines at Paralyzer depending on the level, which can change hourly.

Jared Johnson 🚶 Billy Jones 💧 A high side of good level, Paralyzer

Lake Creek

Paralyzer is the signature drop of Lake Creek, and a rapid that never reveals its true height or power until you've run it. The most popular route contains four stair-stepping boofs in the far river right channel, most of which are shallow. The meat line involves charging out of the river right eddy at the lip, and boofing the far left side of the drop, a harder feat than it sounds due to the left bank sloping back towards you. Failure here leads to a ten' cascade onto rocks. The centerline has been run by a few creek legends at around 750cfs.



Ben Horton/benhorton.biz ♦Brains, the bottom four put-in drop

Kiss Me comes very quickly after Paralyzer, so scout the runout of the drop, and be prepared to eddy out on river left. The scout on Kiss Me is easy, running it is not. Daniel Delavergne once claimed that the worst carnage he ever witnessed was here. At low flow it goes, at medium flow it is almost always portaged, and at high flow it goes. Portage river left politely (and not necessarily discreetly) on the obvious trail up to the house, across the driveway, just to the left of the garage, ignoring the barking dogs, and back down to the river on the trail.

This is all private property, owned by possibly the most kayaker friendly landowners of all time! The Lundberg's own from somewhere above Paralyzer to below Kiss Me, so when you scout, portage, film, or do anything around the rapid you are on their land. Be respectful and friendly. They seemingly like boaters. We love them. Their house is rumored to be for sale, so check with the locals on the current access situation.

The next ½ mile contains the only in-between whitewater of the Bottom Four. Enjoy while dodging the random logs and a sleeper hole next to the only cliff wall on the left (run a far left line). The newly built gauge has all of the characteristics of a low head damn, so boof it with speed and be wary when high.

Cauldron is the grand finale, and one of the all-time favorite Colorado falls. The stories are never ending, from low flow park-and-huck sessions with beginners, drunken claims that it could be done in an innertube, and beat-downs of epic proportions where paddlers swear they met the higher power. The levels in the beta box are precise, with anything above 450cfs creating an ugly right side eddy that circulates partly under the cliff wall and partly behind the falls. Keep to the center or left side, and keep it straight. It's easy and fun at medium to low levels, and locals lap it until it's too dark to see.

Directions

Coming from the town of Twin Lakes (drive slowly) on HWY 82, pull into the Willis Gulch picnic area on the left. This is the take-out for the Bottom Four. Two and a half miles upstream is the Lundberg's house, and a dirt pull-off on the right side. If it's empty, then use this for a put-in for the bottom four (it is a short enough shuttle to hike, run, or bike). Another good river access point is the pullout at mm 74.5, slightly above Brains. My favorite put-in is at a large clearing in the trees and very large dirt pull off on river left, because this drops you shortly above NIMBY. The top put-in is near mm 69, across from a point of interest sign.

Jed Selby ⛹ Mark Olson 💧Cauldron, at a typical Bottom Four level

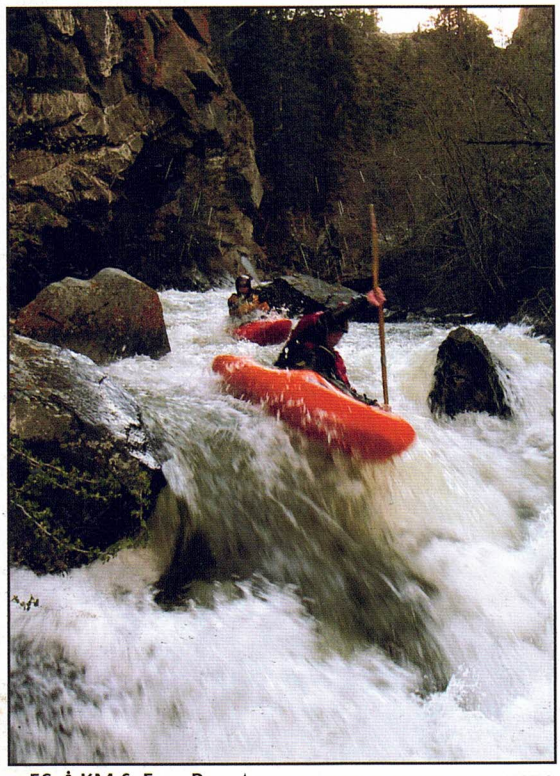
Clear Creek Ark

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	150	200	350	550
Character	go to LC	stay in the deep	start lapping	eddies are lame
Class	IV+	V-	V-	V-
Quality	★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	180 fpm			
Remoteness	near a good dirt road, in mini gorges			
Hitchability	fair			
Length	2.5 miles			
Season	May, June			
Gauge	Clear Creek above Reservoir			
Put-in	Missouri Creek Trailhead			
Take-out	two miles past Clear Creek Ranch, at a dirt road			

The Clear Creek of the Ark is the perfect compliment to Lake Creek, since when LC reaches levels that few would attempt, Clear Creek comes into its prime. This is a run that boats like a IV+, has V- consequences, and has the fun factor of a solid V. It's fast, pretty, and I like cranking down it as quickly and often as possible. Due to the short length it isn't uncommon to complete back-to-back runs.

Although the traditional run involved three gorges, most paddlers now only run the top two, which contain the better scenery and action with less wood. Although the rapids aren't very difficult, the run does create a steady stream of carnage due to its continuous nature—an overwhelming factor for less experienced paddlers, especially combined with a constant wood presence. CKS in Buena Vista usually has a collection of paddles from the run, and on one of my after-peak runs down our group found three paddles in the runout after the second gorge. The CKS staff will know the wood status.

The first few paddlers to run the Clear Creek Ark will usually encounter tons of small wood and subsequently remove it, so by the time its been running for two weeks its usually pretty clean, barring a couple large logs that can be snuck. First timers should glance at a section of one of the gorges to get a feel for the run, but don't waste too much time scouting, since it all looks and runs relatively the same. Aspiring creekers will be doing laps shortly, and loving every second of the read-and-run action. And, if you get bored, the eddyless (by choice) runs can lead to less than twenty minutes of pure ecstasy. Nervous first timers that think they are ready for the run should remember three things—paddle hard, keep it straight, and boof everything.

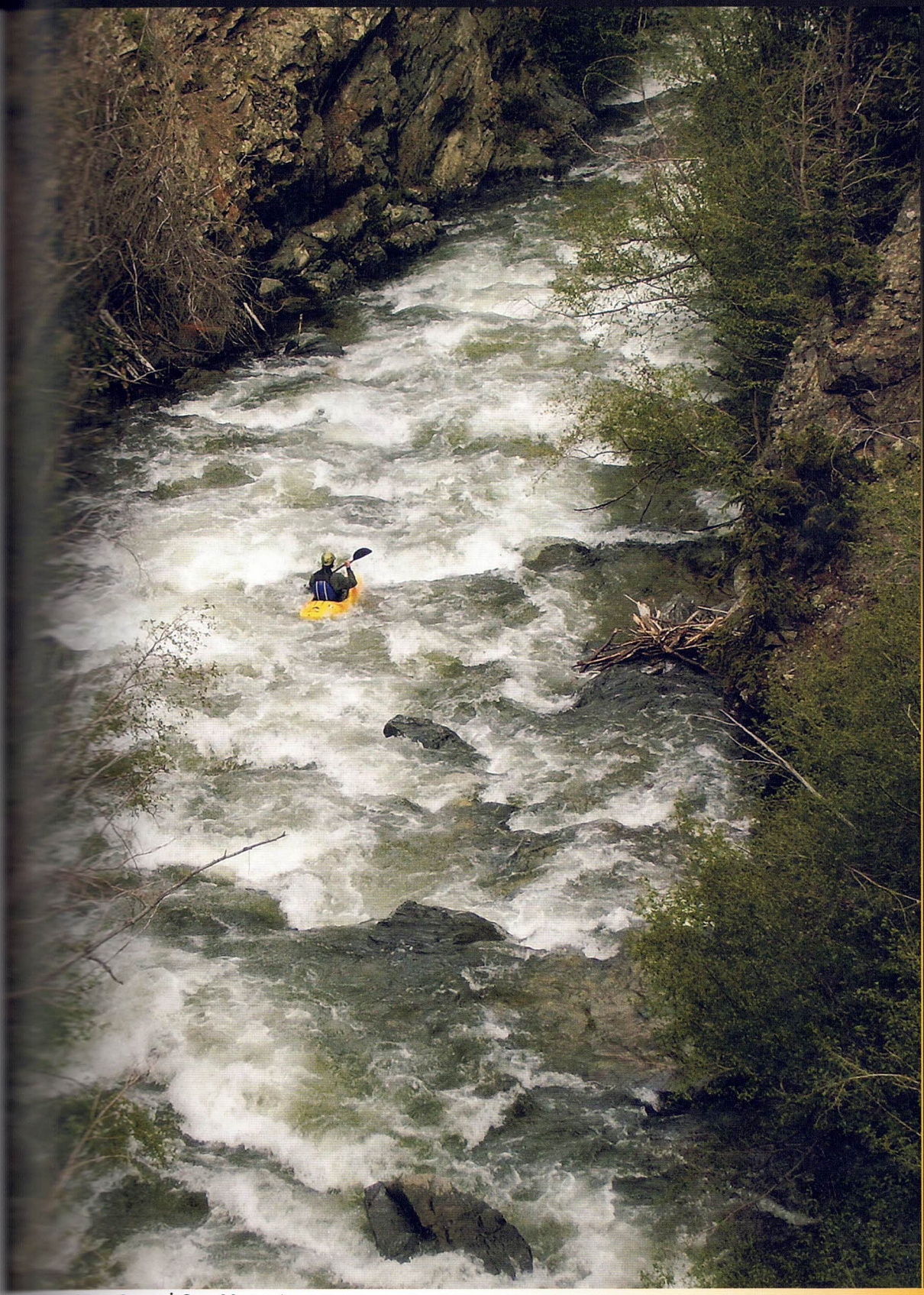


ES 🚶 KM & Evan Ross 💧 crux of second gorge, blue angels

Directions

North of Buena Vista, turn off of Hwy 24 near mm 195 onto FR 390, and continue up the road, passing the reservoir and the well-marked Clear Creek Ranch. Go about 2 miles past the ranch, and turn left onto the unmarked dirt road with a small knoll in the distance. Park at the knoll, or take a truck down to river level just below. The put-in is past the forested switchback, at the obvious Missouri Creek Trailhead. To scout, park on the outside of the first switchback, and walk upstream to the bottom of the first gorge. The view here is typical of the more difficult sections of the run.

FAST, LOW-VOLUME MANK CREEKING. WATCH OUT FOR WOOD, SMALL EDDIES AND PINNED FRIENDS. ABOVE ALL, PRAY FOR HIGH WATER.



Arkansas • Clear Creek Ark

MARK OLSON CHRIS MENGES SOLO MISSION, HEADED INTO THE FIRST GORGE

Pine Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	250	600	1500	2200
Character	fix on rapid only	manageable	the hole forms	the hole washes
Class	IV-	III+ (IV+)	III+ (V-)	IV (V-)
Quality	★	★★	★★★	★★★
Gradient	200 fpm for Pine Creek Rapid			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good			
Length	6 miles or variable			
Season	April-August			
Gauge	Arkansas River below Granite			
Put-in	Granite, or at Pine Creek Rapid			
Take-out	Numbers Launch Site			

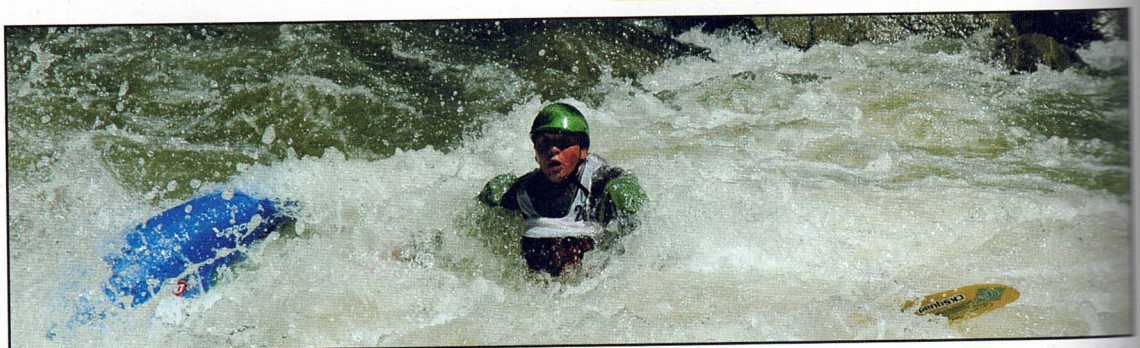
Things have drastically changed since the good ol' days when only the hardcore creekers ran Pine Creek rapid. What was once a bustling section of river with the most difficult rapid on the entire Arkansas, the Granite to Pine Creek run is now more commonly enjoyed in its entirety by commercial rafters, with the crux rapid retaining its popularity only as an optional put-in to the Numbers (next page) for paddlers looking for more action.

The six mile run from Granite to the Numbers contains excellent class III whitewater that gets interupted three times, the first two from the class IV Little Pine Creek Rapid and the now much cleaner Dam Drop that used to be regularly portaged. An optional put-in exists at this dam drop, found near the outflow of Clear Creek reservoir, and this rapid marks the halfway point of the run. Paddlers looking for class III and IV whitewater will find the run can be highly enjoyable, even by opting to portage Pine Creek Rapid. For better or worse, boater worn trails are becoming well developed on both sides of the river that aid the portage.

Pine Creek Rapid continues to be a wonderful treat, although potentially deadly when taken lightly. The rapid is long—about a ½ mile, and at medium levels the Pine Creek Hole shows its true fury with dynamic recirculating swims for those who fail to make a move around it. The hole here is the only feature responsible for the class V rating, as it sits dead center at about the 2/3 point in the rapid. The easiest line is to sneak left, but a right line does exist to improve the odds of success. Runs in a playboat are common, and I prefer to put in here (at the steep road that leads down to the tracks) for a trip on the Numbers. At low water the local creek boaters will run laps to get some sort of boof fix in, and at high flow the main hole is completely washed. There is great downriver play in the short section below that leads to the Numbers put-in.

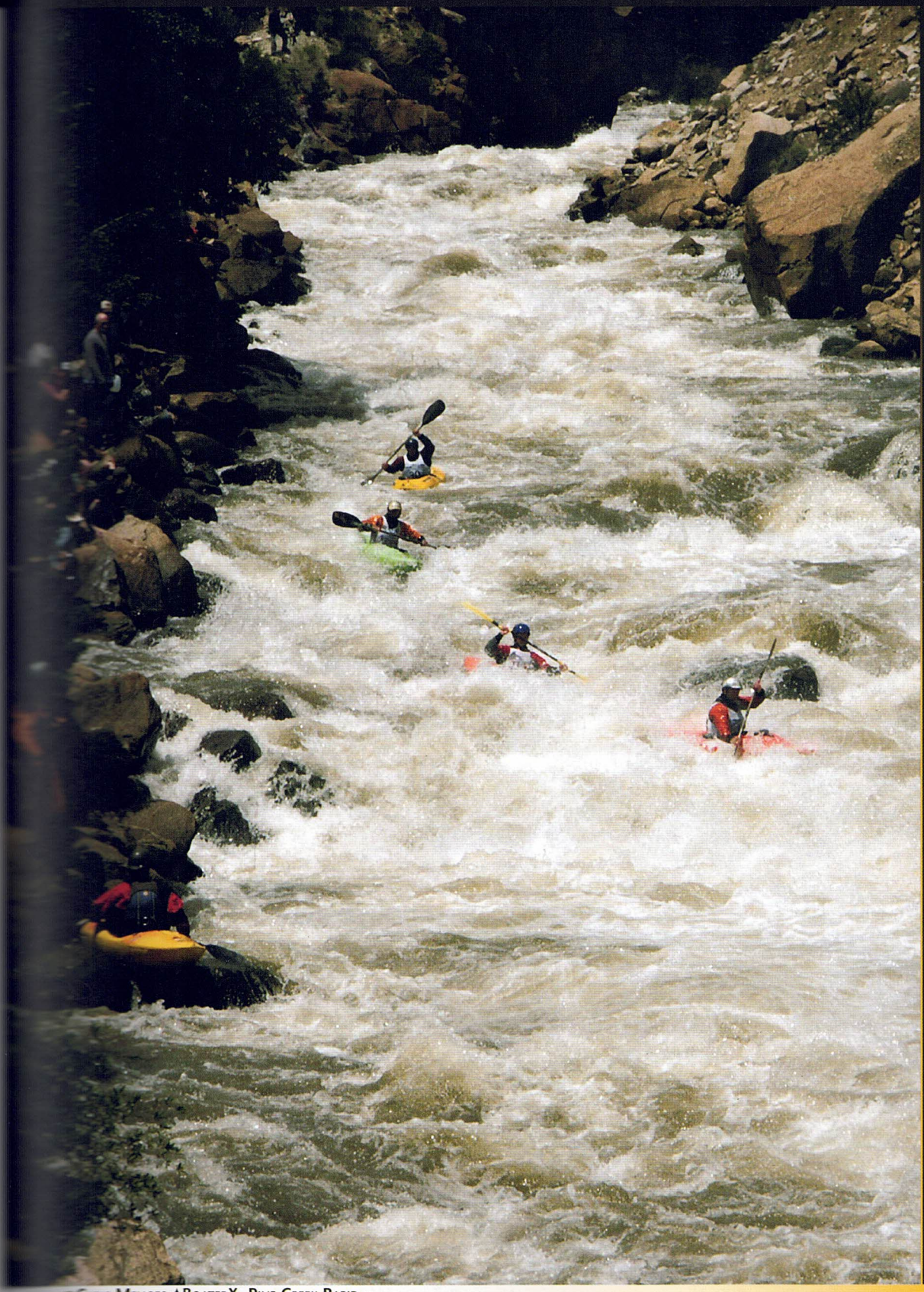
Directions

Put-in at the town of Granite, just off of Hwy 24 where CR 397 crosses to a river left access point. An optional put-in can be found near the Clear Creek outflow. Access is also available directly at the Pine Creek Rapid for running laps at low flow, as a take-out above Pine Creek Rapid, or as a put-in below Pine Creek Rapid (not sure of the legality of this, but I've never had a problem here and a sick boater-x race is becoming an annual event thanks to the railroad). The Numbers Launch Site is the end of this six mile section, but I recommend paddling the Numbers.



Tony Czech Conor Finney even the best sometimes get destroyed—botched race line

As a run, Pine Creek offers easy intermediate paddling. But most will come for the namesake rapid, a good jumpstart to the Numbers.



© Chris Menges ♦BoaterX, Pine Creek Rapid

Numbers

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	250	600	1200	2200
Character	rocky	starting to form	ideal play	the goods
Class	IV-	IV-	IV	IV+
Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	70 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside escape at most points			
Hitchability	great, especially with other boaters			
Length	4.9 miles			
Season	April-August			
Gauge	Arkansas River below Granite			
Put-in	Numbers Launch Site			
Take-out	just below #5			

This is the definition of Colorado class IV. Long boulder garden rapids that are bony at low flow and create stacked holes at higher levels, offering good action for slightly gripped intermediates, and great downriver playboating for experts. The numbered drops of one through six dish out a few styles of whitewater, and paddlers of all levels can find a variety of lines to learn on.

Number One is generally considered the most technical, and many trips have been prematurely ended at Scott's Bridge just downstream, often a wise move since the most carnage tends to happen at drops Number Four and Number Five. If the water is very high, the wave at Number 1.5 is truly epic. Expect to see a local real estate developer and a handful of kayak bums throwing huge aerials.

At lower flows, Number Four has some great play on the river right side, and a few large eddies at the end of the drop offer a great place to regroup for the crux drop. Number Five contains a rocky shoreline on both sides, which becomes an issue for upside-down kayakers as the rapid slowly bends to the left. A well-defined lip at the top and multiple holes that can flip boaters create problems. For kayakers, it's best to run the lip and eddy out on the right, creating a good setup for a strong ferry to the inside of the curve.

Most paddlers take out shortly below Number Five at one of the many river left eddies, but one more rapid awaits downstream for those who choose to paddle the mellow and long stretch. I recommend taking out at Number Five unless the water is high.

Directions

From Hwy 24 take the Scott's Bridge turnoff (near mile marker 200), and take the dirt road upstream to the Numbers Launch Site (fee area). To get to the take-out drive south on Hwy 24 for 1.3 miles and take 371 Rd (Otero Pump Station) across the railroad tracks and the river. Turn right (still 371 Rd), and choose one of the pullouts as your take-out, preferably shortly below Number Five at low flow or 3.3 miles further downstream at the Railroad Bridge Access Site.

Norm Cooling/PhotosByTheNumbers.com ♦ Raft traffic, Number Five

Smooth boulder garden rapids create the standard class IV run for the state of Colorado, and the most classic stretch of the Arkansas.

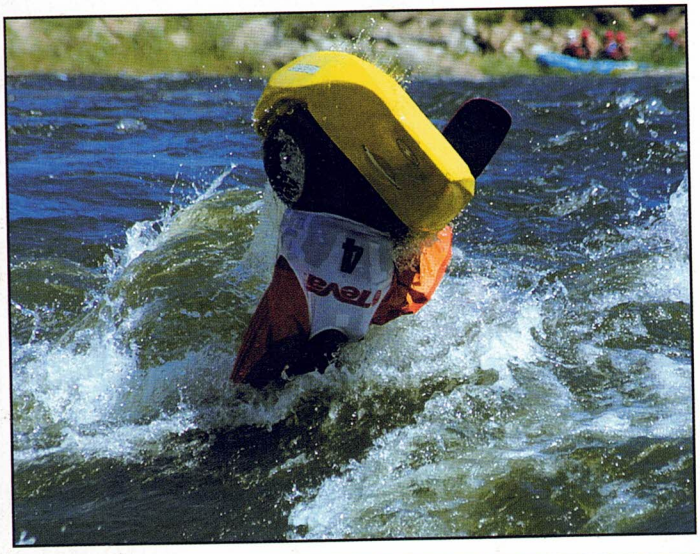
BV Park & Beginner Runs

Buena Vista is the kayaking equivalent of a ski resort town. During the winter months the place is dead, with only a fragment of the kayaking community remaining in town—passing away the winter with poker nights and an occasional night out at the deserted Lariat Bar, affectionately known as The Rope. A single male would go crazy if it weren't for Salida or Summit County offering a slight escape. Then spring hits. The raft guides return to their temporary one-room apartments or lay claim to a seasonal campsite, provided by the raft company that employs them to push tourist-weighted rubber down the Ark. The Rope packs full of drunken river rats with conversations ranging from the most recent commercial flips, to who just bagged Lake Creek at high flow, and how long the Clear Creek Ark is going to run. CKS's Pimp'n'Ho event & Paddlefest can get especially wild with scantly clad women, clean raft guides, beer, and afro wigs. Cheers to summer vacation.

Buena Vista Park

Found at the end of Main Street, the whitewater park, which will serve as the future centerpiece to the South Main Project, is excellently designed by the Selby's and company for throwing huge loops and other hole moves. CKS employees sneak it in on their lunch break, and an occasional night session creates a constant flow of paddlers playing the features that run all summer long. The orginal feature, the Uptown Hole, is a rowdy intermediate wave-hole that allows for big loops and technical combo-moves.

Update: The BV River Park now encompasses four river features starting with the original "Uptown Hole" at the Barbara Whipple Bridge with three wave/holes downstream through the new Buena Vista River Park in the South Main Development. The entire park is now linked with new trails, staircases and access ramps to make any hole-rats play day a synch. The recent sculpting should have made it a better park for beginner paddlers. I say "should," because the newly redesigned park was built in late 2006, so its uncertain what will be there during 2007 run-off.



The beginner options aren't limited to the whitewater park. The park splits the slightly more difficult Fractions Section upstream, and the Lower Town and Milk Run below.

Directions: The Buena Vista WWP is at the end of Main Street (veer left). Main St and Hwy 24 meet at the only stoplight.

CFS	300<min<600<good 900<prime<1700
Class	III+
Eddy	excellent
Quality	★★★★★
Season	April to August
Gauge	Ark above Nathrop
Riv Access	BV's Main St.

Fractions

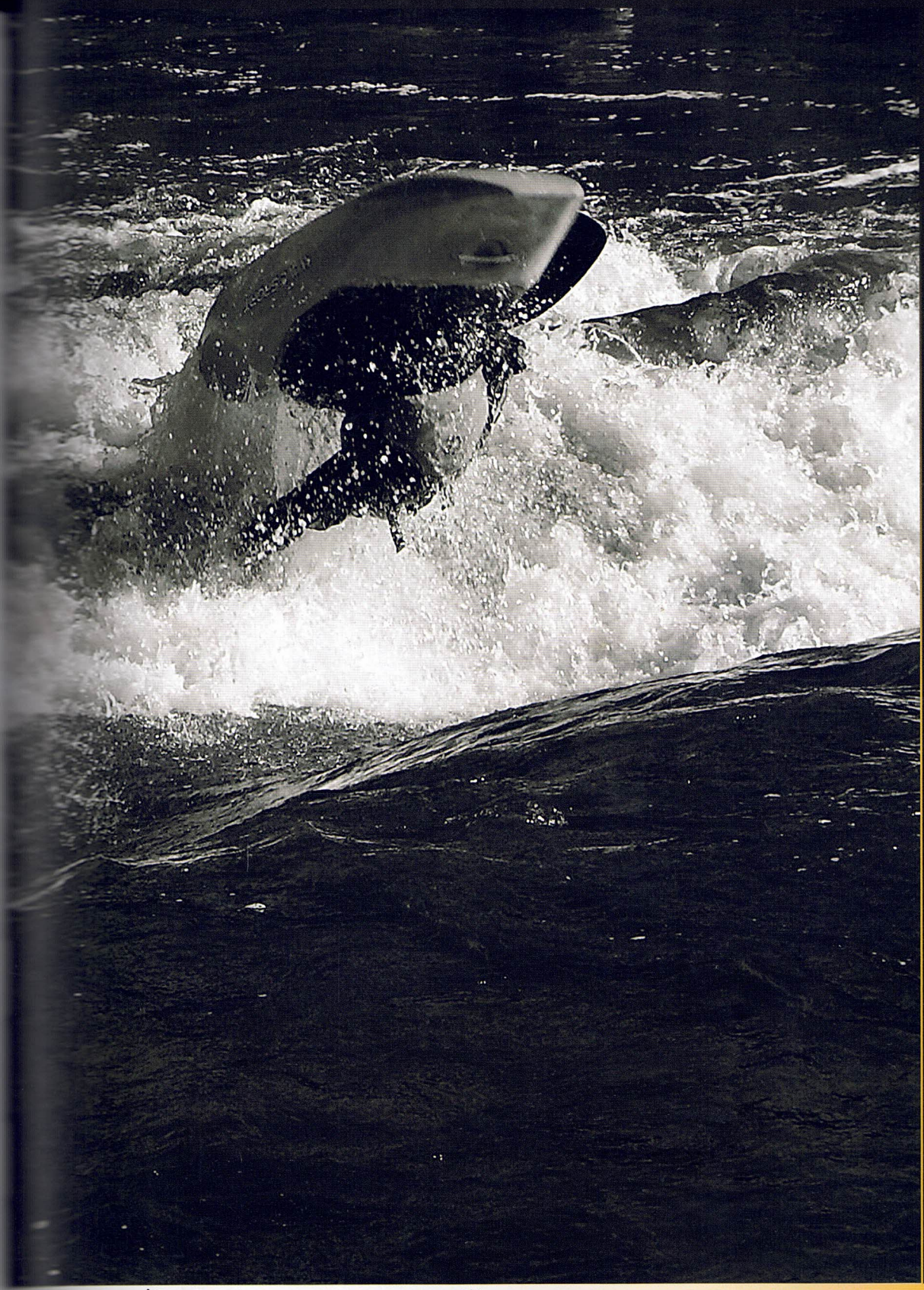
Putting-in at the Railroad Bridge Launch Site, the lowest of the Numbers take-outs, is the best for the longest run. A more convenient shuttle is possible by utilizing the dirt turnoff from Hwy 24, just south of the private Harvard Estates entrance. This option still allows for a proper warm-up before being faced with the class III rapids of Frog Rock and House Rock, both containing large boulders that create currents which serve as a great testing ground for aspring class III paddlers. A scout will make things easier.

Directions: To get to the Fractions put-ins from BV, use Hwy 24 to reach a pullout ¾-mile south of Harvard Estates, or 371 Rd from downtown to the RR Bridge Launch Site. Elephant Rock is a lower alternative, off of 371 Rd north of BV. Take out at the WWP.

CFS	400<min<2200<high
Class	III<2200<III+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	45 fpm
Length	7 miles
Season	May-August
Gauge	Ark above Nathrop
Put-in	RR Bridge Launch Site
Take-out	BV Park

Luke Urbine Jed Selby Macho Moving his backyard

BUENA VISTA IS A WHITEWATER TOWN. THE WINTER MONTHS ARE DEAD, AND THEN SUDDDENLY THE ROPE COMES ALIVE WITH RAFT GUIDES RETURNING FOR ANOTHER CRAZY SUMMER ON THE RIVER.



JED SELBY DAVE FUSILI LOOPING HUGE AT THE FIRST OF THE BV FEATURES—MOTIVATION FROM A GUY IN A VAN DOWN BY THE RIVER

Lower Town

Generally class II+ with one crux obstacle. About 2/3's of the way to the Johnson Village Hwy 285 bridge is a dam drop that contains a somewhat difficult boat chute. Stark beginners will want to scout, and some will choose to portage—which is unfortunate since doing either will likely lead to landowner confrontation. It's best to run the class III chute right of center without scouting, or just run the Milk Run downstream. Take out at the Hwy 285 bridge.

Tina's Relationship Tip: Take your shuttle-bunny girlfriend out for a romantic sunset float as a sweet thank you. If she likes it spicey, you can dine her at the mexican food joint in Johnson Village.

Directions: Put in at the WWP. Take out at the Hwy 285 bridge in Johnson Village.

CFS	400<min<2200<high
Class	III-<1800<III
Quality	★
Gradient	60 fpm
Length	2.5 miles
Season	May-August
Gauge	Ark above Nathrop
Put-in	BV Park
Take-out	Johnson Village bridge

Milk Run

The beginner of all area beginner runs starts at Johnson Village. Thus, the crux of the run is at the put-in eddy. Tell your first-time friends to look and lean downstream to increase the odds of a successful peel-out. At low flow a swimmer can easily get out of the river, although it is continuous in nature making gear collection tricky. Higher levels make for a swift start, but the difficulty never climbs above class III. The training-wheels run of the Ark near BV.

Rent some inflatable kayaks from the local shop and show your non-kayaking friends a fun and mellow first time out. Not all kayaking has to be adrenaline pumping gnar, at least not for an afternoon. And if you get bored you can always bring the mountain bike to check off some of the nearby trails, described in Nathan Ward's Salida Singletrack.

Directions: Put-in at Johnson Village and take out at Fisherman's Bridge off of 301 Rd. Ruby Mtn CG is also a good take-out.

CFS	400<min<2200<high
Class	II+<2200<III-
Quality	★★
Gradient	30 fpm
Length	4 miles
Season	May-August
Gauge	Ark above Nathrop
Put-in	Johnson Village bridge
Take-out	Fisherman's Bridge or Ruby Mtn CG

JOSH HEISE ♦ SUNSET AT THE BV HOLE

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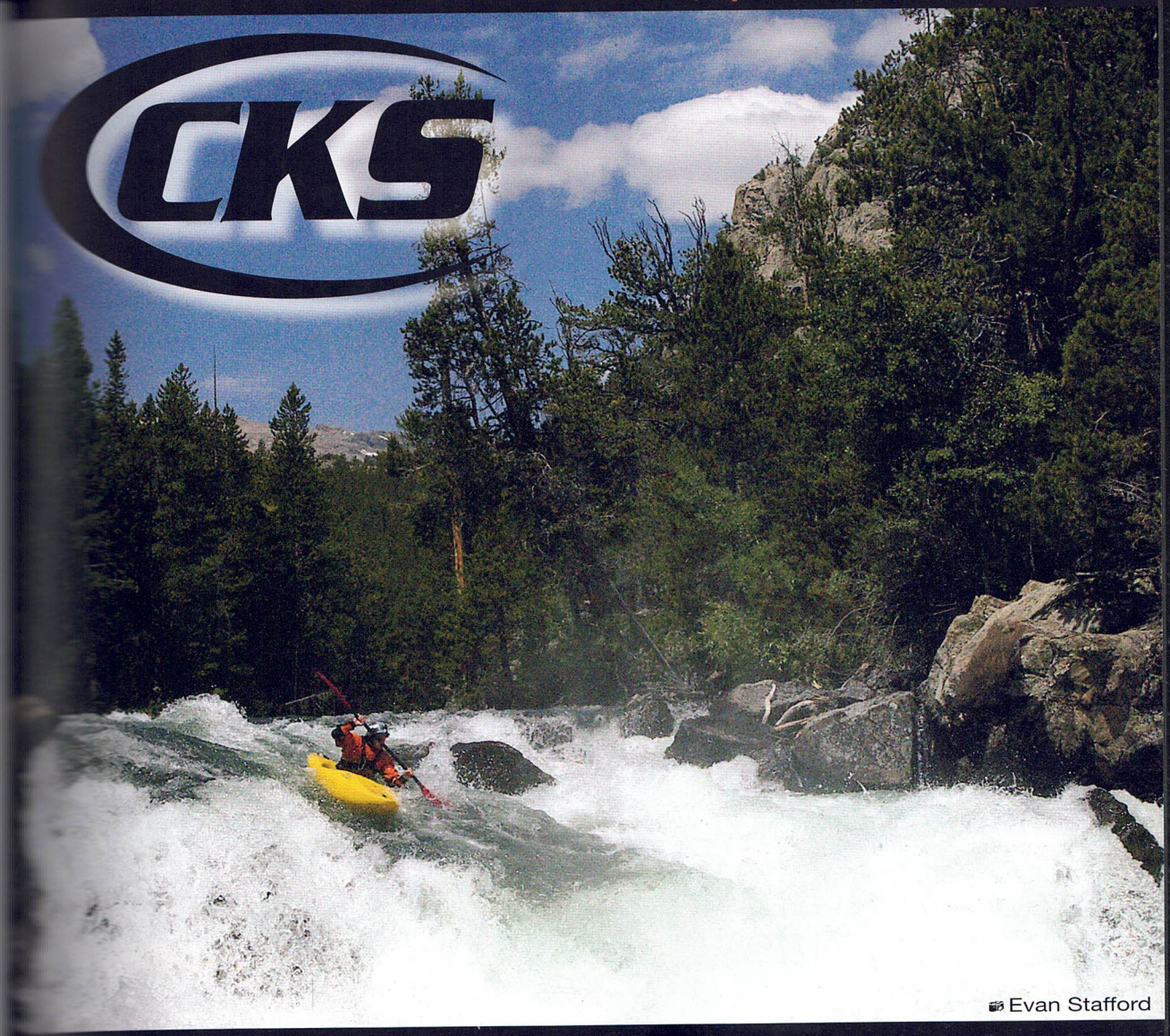

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Browns Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	300	600	1400	2200
Character	off season training	rafters bitching	say whee	freestyle assault
Class	III	III	III+ (IVs)	IV- (IVs)
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	30 fpm			
Remoteness	a little commiting			
Hitchability	good with other boaters			
Length	13 miles (side creek cuts off a few miles of flat)			
Season	April to August			
Gauge	Arkansas River near Nathrop			
Put-in	Fisherman's Bridge or Chalk Creek for kayaks			
Take-out	Hecla Junction or Stone Bridge			

This is a beautiful secluded canyon with ultra-fun class III whitewater that you've probably heard of. And your cousin or aunt or both have probably rafted it too, even if they can't remember the name. This is it: the most raft crowded run in the nation and possibly the world. Do not, I repeat, do not attempt this run mid-day on a summer weekend—unless you are after a dirty raft guide of the opposite sex and want to try and impress them with a switch barrel roll while they use you to boost their tip production. Doing this run at the wrong time will see you waiting in a line of rubber bound tourists and screaming Girl Scouts just hoping to find a break so you can squeeze in and rush through the next rapid. The crowds aside, a late afternoon/evening run through Browns Canyon can be a joyous play-filled romp down one of Colorado's classic stretches.

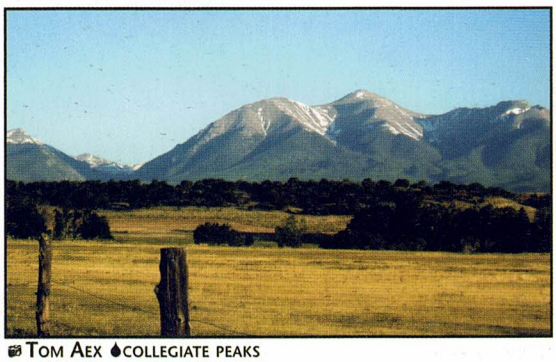
The fun starts at Canyon Doors, an epic wave-hole at 1400+ cfs, with spotty eddy service on the left and a beating for those who haven't figured out why play competitions were coined rodeos in the first place. More fun continues with quite powerful eddy lines, waves and holes. The stoutest of which constitutes probably the most talked about rapid of all time, Zoom Flume.

Raft tourists love Zoom Flume rapid (and its name) and most probably don't realize that whitewater gets any harder than this or that rapids get named anything even remotely more creative. This rapid can certainly pack a punch at high water as it gradually finds its way into class IV territory. The entire run becomes quite continuous at flows above 2500 cfs and class IV skills will keep long distance swims to a minimum.

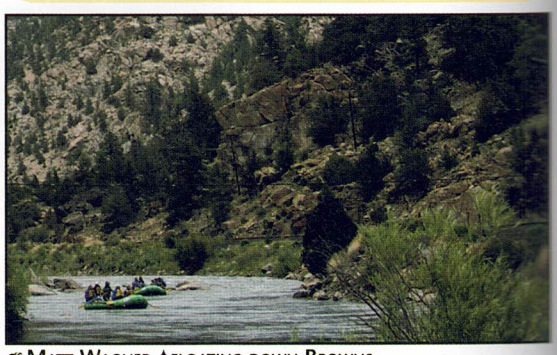
At the right flows (over 1000 cfs) boaters might want to continue below Hecla Junction to Stone Bridge and get a couple of extra rapids along the way. Siedel's Suckhole is the rapid of note and is solid class IV at most levels. The actual Stone Bridge is a few hundred yards above the take-out and cannot be floated under at flows over 3500 cfs.

Directions

The raft put-in (fee) is at Fisherman's Bridge off Hwy 285 on Rd 301. When there is enough water kayakers can access this run by paddling down Chalk Creek (III) from Hwy 285 near Nathrop. This cuts out some flats at the beginning, and it's free. The take-out is four or five long miles down Rd 194 off Hwy 285, a few miles upstream of the Hwy 285/Hwy 291 junction. The Stone Bridge take-out is on Hwy 291, upstream and river right of the bridge.



Tom Aex ♦ Collegiate Peaks



Matt Wagner ♦ Floating down Browns

A LATE AFTERNOON/EVENING RUN THROUGH BROWNS CANYON CAN BE A JOYOUS PLAY-FILLED ROMP DOWN ONE OF COLORADO'S TRULY CLASSIC STRETCHES.

North Fork of the South Arkansas River

The North Fork of the South Arkansas can provide some park-and-huck possibilities for the class V+ creek boater in the form of an impressive triple drop. The drop holds impressive vertical in three closely linked sections. A corkscrewing entrance flume sets up for a perfectly shaped fan boof. Stick the landing into the micro whirlpool, the back of which feeds into a 15' falls with a shallow landing. Repeat as necessary.

Two tight drops next to a cliff wall follow and then the culvert is in your face. Eddy out above the culvert and take out, because the pipe is known to catch wood. There are several drops up higher that have been paddled in the past but wood currently has a tight choke hold on most sections of this creek.

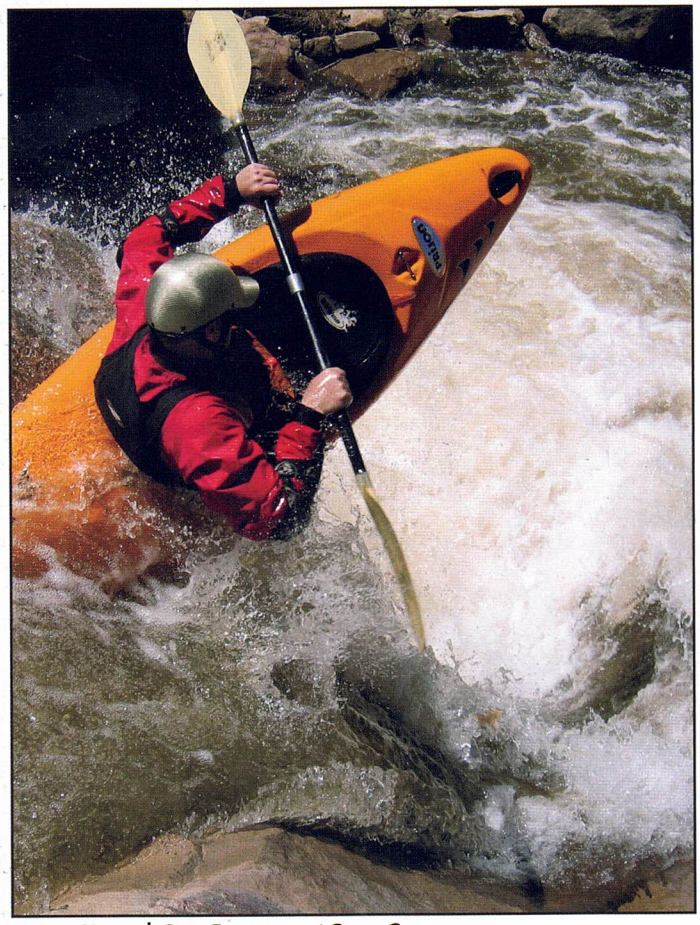
Directions: Park above the Angels of Shavano CG on Hwy 50 west of Salida, where the creek flows into a culvert under the road. Hike up the steep bank on river right, scouting along the way, until you reach the put-in.

-Mike Hagadorn

CFS	100<min
Class	V+
Quality	★★
Gradient	verts and pools
Length	short
Season	peak
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Angels of Shavano CG

Grape Creek

Every boater that has run this creek since the millennia has claimed that it wasn't worth it, they would never do it again, and that there is so much better whitewater to run rather than waste a day here. The underlying disgust for this run is spurred from the very manky whitewater that never gets padded out by a reasonable flow. The words "small window" are an understatement. However, if one day you find that every other run in this book is flooded out, and Grape Creek is running at least 300 cfs, then it might be worth doing just once.



Alex Henes ⛹ Gary Edgeworth ♦Grape Creek mank

Assume that day has come. Once on the river, teams will paddle miles of easy III only to eventually be faced with a screwed up canyon containing sieves, undercuts, and a few blind corners. Expect multiple portages even around drops that look good, because the good drops immediately lead into the bad drops. There are some vertical falls in here but nothing that is classic, and most of the river needs to be reshaped by the high water that doesn't ever arrive.

At least it is a scenic canyon, so hike through when there isn't any water—which is now.

Directions: Use the Royal Gorge take-out at Centennial Park. To reach the put-in, from Canon City, drive south on 4th St, veer left on Elm St, then immediately turn right onto Oak Creek Grade Road. Continue for 13.3 miles, turning right onto the Grape Creek Access 4WD road. All of the major action is above the Temple Canyon Road bridge, which offers alternate river access.

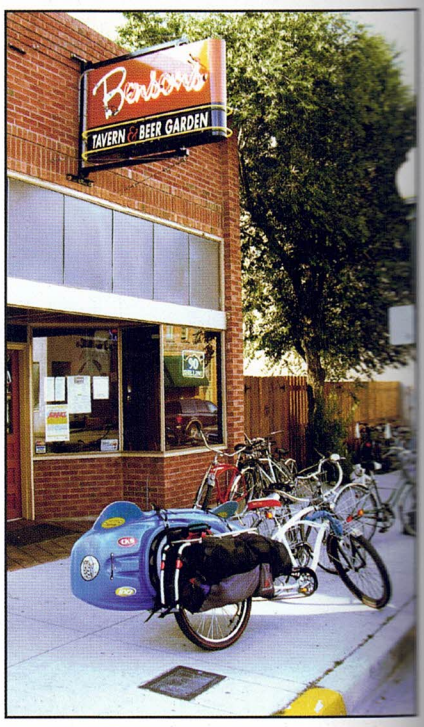
CFS	300<min<600<okay
Class	V (P)
Quality	★
Gradient	120 fpm avg, 215 crux
Length	15.1 miles (12 of flat)
Season	non-existent
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Bear Gulch
Take-out	Centennial Park

Colorado is home to the nation's muddiest river access issues.

Learn what American Whitewater is doing to help at www.americanwhitewater.org

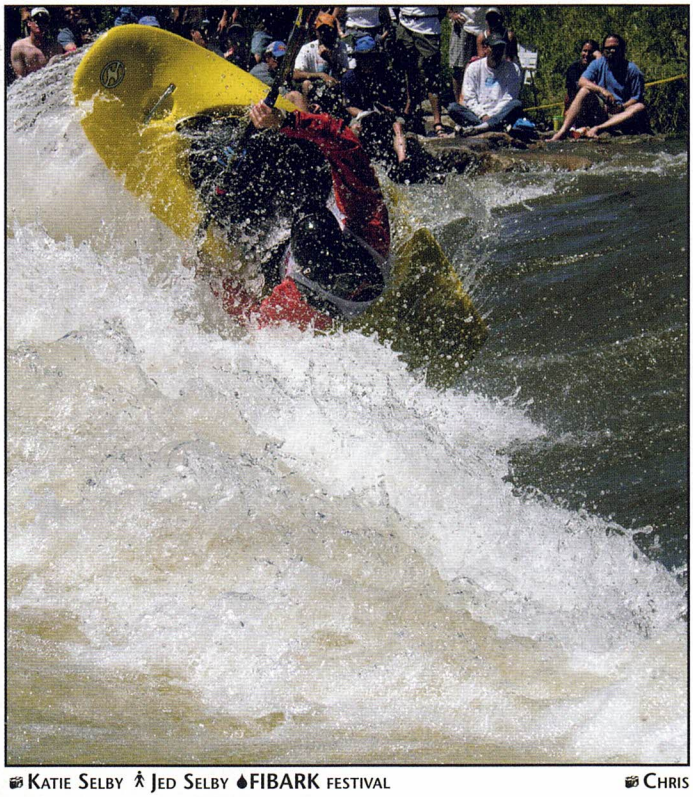
Although there seems to be some discrepancy over which choice drink was being consumed as two paddlers discussed the crazy idea of racing the Arkansas River from Salida to Canon City, one thing is for sure—if it was coffee it must have been spiked. At a time when we view boat designs from less than 10 years ago as relics, it's hard to imagine what kind of crazy individual would attempt such a feat with 1949 boat technology. The 56-mile race proved to be a formidable challenge, as only one team (paddling a type of two person folding-craft) made it through the Royal Gorge to the finish. Although many of the contestants didn't continue on, the Salida-Royal Gorge Boat Race did, becoming FIBArk (First In Boating on the Ark) in 1954 as an ACA sanctioned event. The shortened 25.7-mile course between Salida and Cotopaxi continues to harvest the annual race held in early June.

Fast-forward 50 years. Huge RV's with decorative sponsorship paint-jobs get preferential parking on the boat ramp, with tents over demo boats attracting curious consumers considering an upgrade. Hip-hop is playing over the loud speaker as the best freestyle kayakers in the world compete at the manmade whitewater park and 200+ spectators line the bank in anticipation of another space godzilla or phonix monkey about to be thrown. That night the film premiere featuring the boatercross starts the party prior to the finale at The Vic—the most famous boater bar in Colorado. Salida still embraces kayaking, perhaps more than ever.



Salida Park

Apart from the FIBArk weekend, the crowds here are reasonable. The park is considered by many to be one of the best in the state, due to the main feature having a long season, being exceptionally friendly for freestyle beginners, and still offering up big aerials for experts. More than a few Salida paddlers refuse to paddle at BV more than a few times a year, and the territorialism between the paddling towns has led to a friendly rivalry among local jibbers. A nearby streetlight allows for night paddling, and the only serious hazard is the bridge abutment just downstream of the boat ramp. A few other features exist here, and the park seems to host annual off-season construction, partially in response to the high water that occasionally blows out a feature. Fortunately, locals like Mike Harvey keep things in excellent working order, making Salida a worthy quick session, or a great place to spend a weekend.



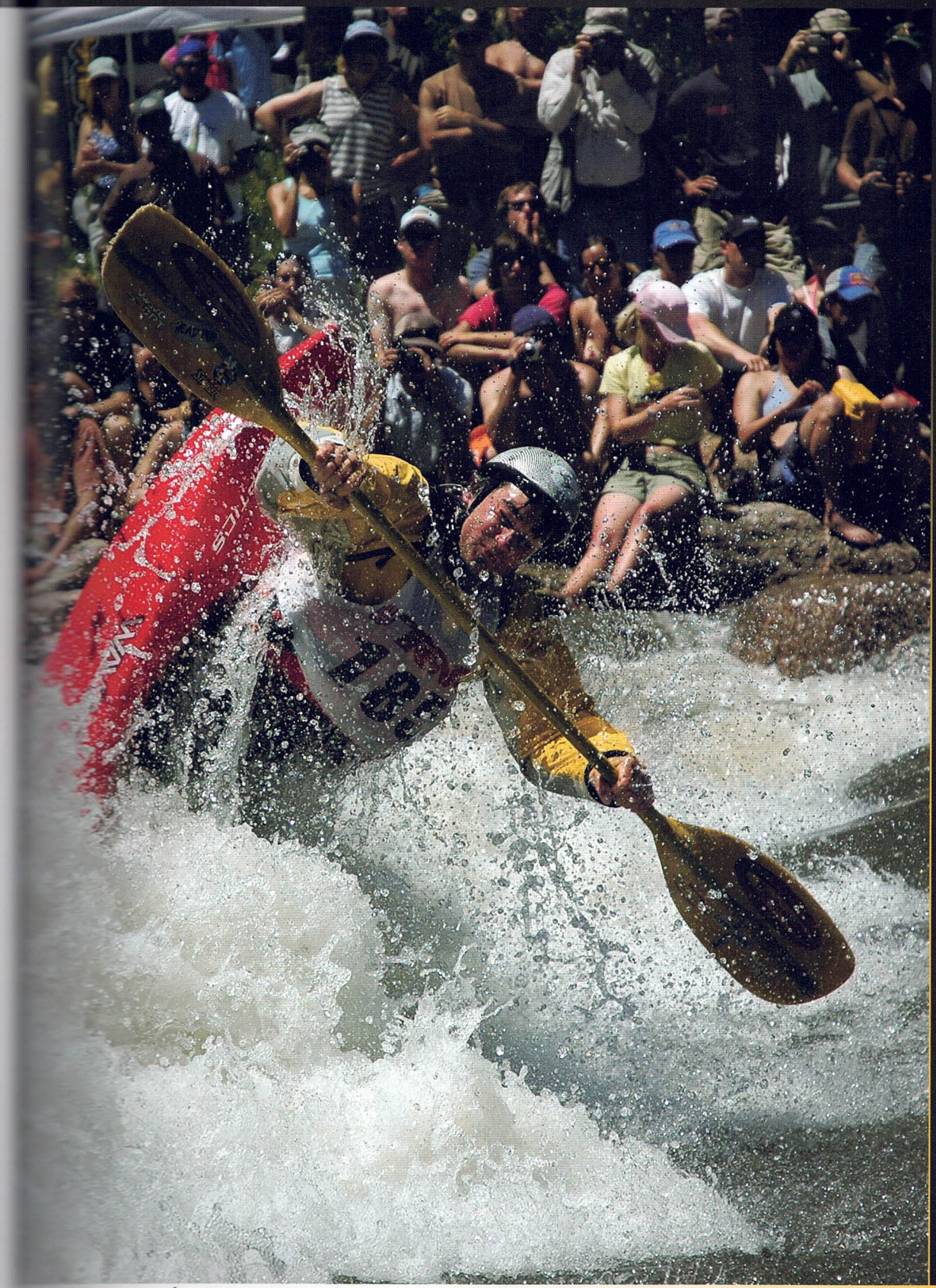
Directions: The Salida Park is downtown, just off of F St where there is a boat ramp and usually ample parking.

CFS	300<optimal
Class	III-<1200<III+
Eddy	excellent
Quality	★★★★★
Season	March-October
Gauge	Ark @ Salida
Riv Access	F St. Boat Ramp

KATIE SELBY 🚶 JED SELBY ♦FIBARK FESTIVAL

CHRIS MENGES ♦THE THREE ESSENTIAL B'S—BOAT, BIKE, BEER

The historical down river race started prior to 1950. Whitewater kayaking, paddlers, and rivers have changed greatly since then, although the love of such is permanently etched in Salida's heart.



Tony Czech Ben Guska FIBARK festival

Salida to Pinnacle Rock

The gnarly-ness of the FIBArk race, and this section that it covered is long gone, as paddler technique and technology have improved greatly. This section contains predominately class II whitewater, with a handful of easy III's. Multiple put-in and take-out options exist on the river here, which closely parallels Hwy 50 from the Rincon River Access down. Just upstream of Rincon is the Squirt Spot that bear's the name. Two miles above Cotopaxi is Cottonwood Rapid, the biggest of this section. A good forward stroke will see most paddlers through.

Directions: Put-in or take-out anywhere along Hwy 50 between Salida and the popular Pinnacle Rock section downstream.

CFS	min<500<ideal<2700
Class	II+ (III to III+)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	25 fpm
Length	9.8 miles (variable)
Season	May-Aug
Gauge	Ark @ Salida
Riv Access	Salida Park or variable on Hwy 50

Rincon Squirt Spot

Offering up *looong*, deep, consistently smooth rides to satisfy the hungriest of mystery hounds, Rincon is truly an epic squirt-boating destination. The two-mile Squirt Dome section on the Arkansas near Swissvale was once squirted regularly. The playful and strong converging currents and eddy-lines are still a great recipe to achieve sought after downtime. Just above the take-out at Rincon the river splits around an island, and out of the depths a swirling whirlpool surfaces with the power to swallow squirt boaters whole for up to twenty coveted seconds of underwater glory. This perfect Y-seam is the main attraction, and is now referred to as Rincon.

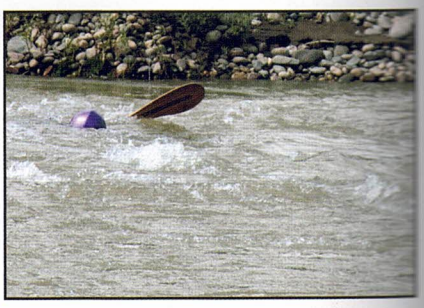
Charc: Most will enter from the left side of the squeeze and ferry out into the current with a steady drift towards the Y. Any variety of charcs will allow you to drop—spinning either direction, or plowing upstream while equalizing stern depth.

Care should be taken by Rincon rookies to not drop in too high above the Y. Known as The Love Triangle, this area can offer some serious rides—but the depth, duration of downtime and seeming inability to resurface could be a bit intimidating to the uninitiated tadpole.

Rendezvous: The summer of 2006 marked the first, and hopefully annual, Rincon Rendezvous—a weekend gathering to celebrate one of Colorado's finest mystery move venues, and the possible resurgence of squirt boating.

Directions: Drive east from Salida on Hwy 50 to the Wellsville Bridge. Cross the river and follow the dirt road until you cross under the railroad tracks and then be on the lookout for a big diagonal boulder that marks the Typewriter Wave and the best put-in. The Rincon take-out is a few miles downstream of Wellsville on Hwy 50, but you can park-and-play it by taking-out on river left and hiking upstream.

-Len Eckstein



CFS	600<optimal<900
Class	III
Eddy	good
Quality	★★★★★ (squirt)
Season	April, May, July, Aug
Gauge	Ark @ Salida
Riv Access	nr Wellsville, Hwy 50

Pinnacle Rock

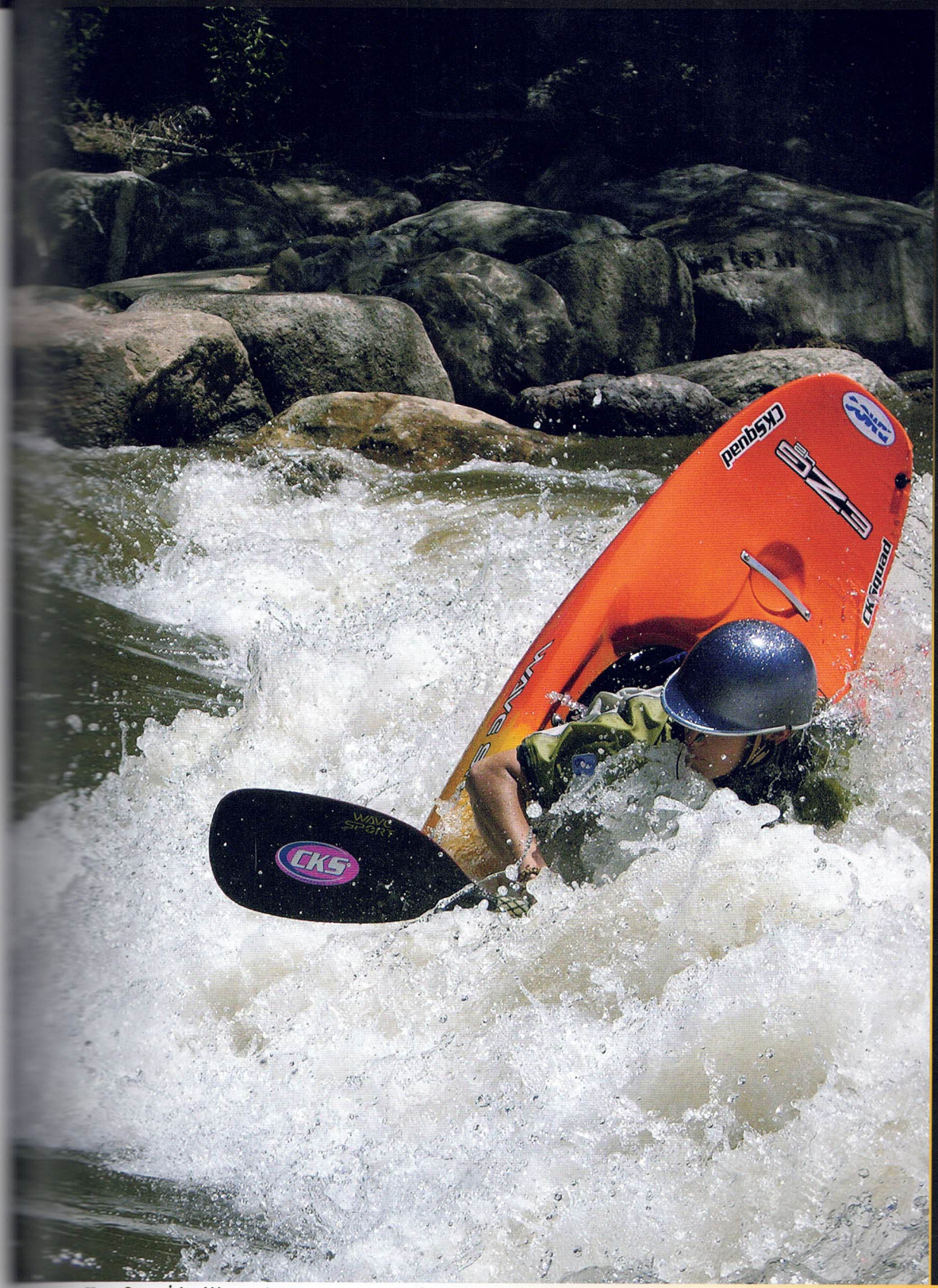
The river is generally roadside, and a titch harder than Salida and Pinnacle Rock upstream. The difficulty is upped in part, because of Three Rocks rapid a quarter of the way into the run. Stacked obstacles can have a snowball effect to an off-line boater, but it's usually III+ or easier at normal flows.

Five Points access avoids this by putting in below. High water can push the rating to IV- due to the continuousness throughout this section. Access to this section of river requires a State Park Pass, but the day fee is reasonably priced.

Directions: Both access points are easily accessed from Hwy 50. Take-out at Parkdale Launch. Put-in 9.1 miles upstream at the Pinnacle Rock Launch.

CFS	min<500<ideal<2700
Class	III<2700<IV-
Quality	★★
Gradient	30 fpm
Length	38.7 miles (variable)
Season	May-Aug
Gauge	Ark near Parkdale
Put-in	Rincon or other
Take-out	Parkdale or other

Rebecca Wilkerson Sam Bass Rincon mystery move



Katie Selby Jesi Walton cartwheel like a girl, Salida Park

Royal Gorge

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	200	600	2000	3500
Character	ledges & shallow	Sunshine starts flush	better	big volume play
Class	III- (III+)	III (III+)	III+ (IV-)	IV+
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	45 fpm			
Remoteness	committing, with a train or trolley out			
Hitchability	okay			
Length	8.7 miles			
Season	May to August			
Gauge	Arkansas near Parkdale			
Put-in	Parkdale			
Take-out	Centennial Park, Canon City			

The Royal Gorge is the standard boating fare of the Lower Arkansas, and attracts the majority of weekend paddlers looking to get out of the Springs or Pueblo. It also attracts all of the other non-river rats that want to check out the Royal Gorge Bridge (a giant tourist trap), or those who want to give commercial rafting a shot. The overrun canyon is no longer wilderness, but great days can still be had here as long as paddlers remain heads up enough to not end up underneath a raft, or in any of the manmade structure debris that line much of the canyon. A train runs the length of the canyon, so even buried in the tall walls the effects of civilization can be felt.

The Gorge can be run pretty much year round, and offers a great stepping stone for paddlers looking to get just a titch better before attempting the Numbers, which is a step tougher at all comparable water levels. Advanced freestyle paddlers can look for the highest flows possible for maximum enjoyment. Afternoon runs are common for paddlers who know the run, but plan on a long day for a virgin run.

Class III boaters should expect a few scouts at all levels (and should only drop in at flows less than 2000 cfs), and almost all paddlers will scout the infamous Sunshine Rapid—the first rapid of note, and the commercial raft photographer hangout. Multiple lines exist to get through or around the big hole at the bottom, but strong paddlers can hit it anywhere if they choose. The scout is on the pipe found river right.

DAVE BUMGARNER ♦ GUIDE TRAINING

Below here the canyon narrows, and the only other rapid of notable difficulty can be found just downstream of the bridge. Wall Slammer can be scouted from river left, above the cement wall. If Sunshine is easy then it's possible to forego the scout. Do whatever you feel comfortable doing, and wave to the gawking tourists that line the river left bank.

A number of splat rocks and small ledge holes offer good play at low flow, but the real draw for freestylers is the super high water runs. It's possible to wave wheel yourself down the entire canyon at these flows, and the numerous on-the-fly waves and holes offer excellent blue-angel style playboating. I can remember one seemingly amazing wave that allowed for throwing a huge wavewheel, a real treat until I landed in the sticky and violent ledge hole hidden immediately behind the crest of the wave.

Eventually the run mellows as the walls recess, and a dam drop comes just before reaching Canon City. A boat chute on river left gets paddlers through safely, and at certain levels this is a good play feature. A pile of twisted steel downstream should be negotiated on the right.

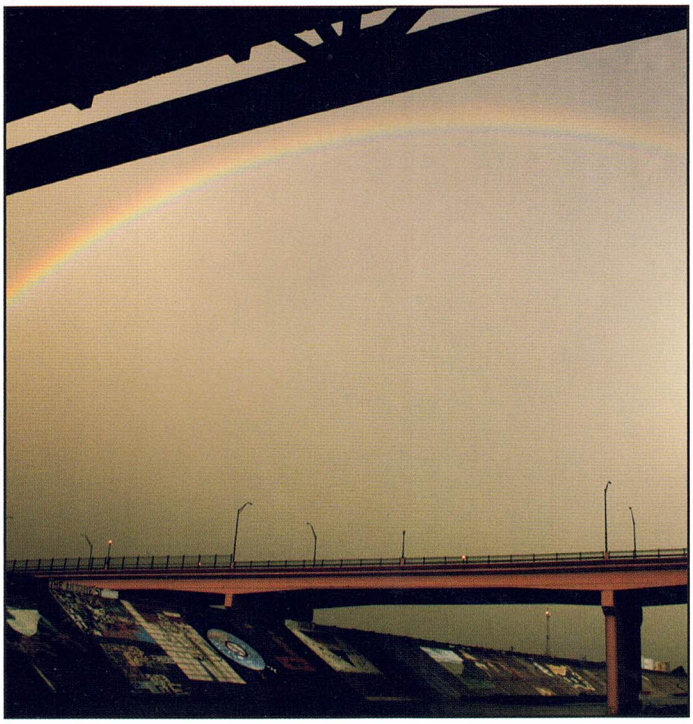
Directions

The take-out can be found in Canon City by turning south from Hwy 50 onto 4th St, and crossing the bridge to the river right. Turn right on Griffin St, and then immediately right into Centennial Park where a boat ramp aides in access. To reach the put-in take Hwy 50 west. Shortly after crossing over the Ark, look for the Parkdale Launch site on the right, near mm 267.

It attracts the majority of weekend paddlers from the Springs or Pueblo. It also attracts non-river rats to check out the Royal Gorge Bridge, or those that want to give commercial rafting a shot.

Mike Taveras Dave Bumgarner Sunshine Hole

Pueblo Park



CFS	450<min<700<good 2000<best
Class	III
Eddy	excellent
Quality	★★★★
Season	April to September
Gauge	Ark @ Pueblo
Riv Access	Lincoln St. or Corona St.

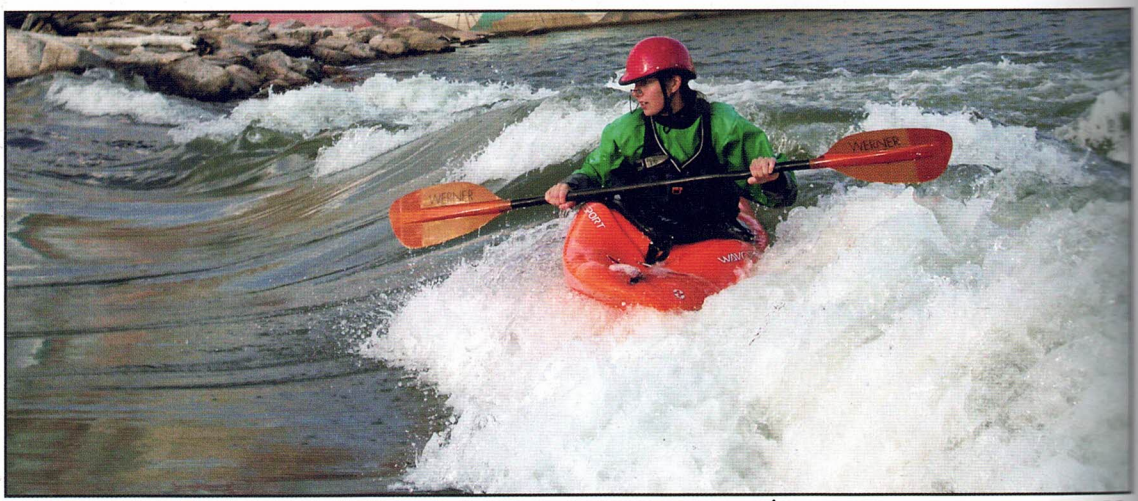
The town of Pueblo did it right. They took the concrete canal that contains the Arkansas River, dictating the rivers course through downtown, and transformed this manmade ditch into a better manmade river, *er*, ditch. Large murals run the length of the park on the 58' high concrete wall, continuing on for about two miles, with a short section overshadowing the park with dragons, random spirals, and a weird angel thing that according to some, "has a nice set of tits." It's an art show direct from the polluted eddy.

Eight features total, with an optimal flow of about 700 cfs creating worthwhile play in the form of easy surf waves, some shallow holes for cartwheeling, and a weird pocket directly behind #5 that allows for air loops, but nothing else. Playable eddy lines and pools are found about as low as you want to catch it, but most locals won't bother until it hits about 450 cfs. It's not as good as the upstream neighbors, but it will give the South Platte parks a run for their money.

The fourth and seventh features are the most popular, since they are typically the biggest wave and hole respectively. I prefer #6 for the most variety for spins and surfs, since #4 can be a flushy front surfer at in-between levels. The more water the better here, and changes are still likely to come as the park further develops into its own center of the Pueblo kayaking world.

This is also the closest kayaking to Colorado Springs, and there is a lot of good singletrack mountain biking in the nearby foothills, an option for a multi-sport day.

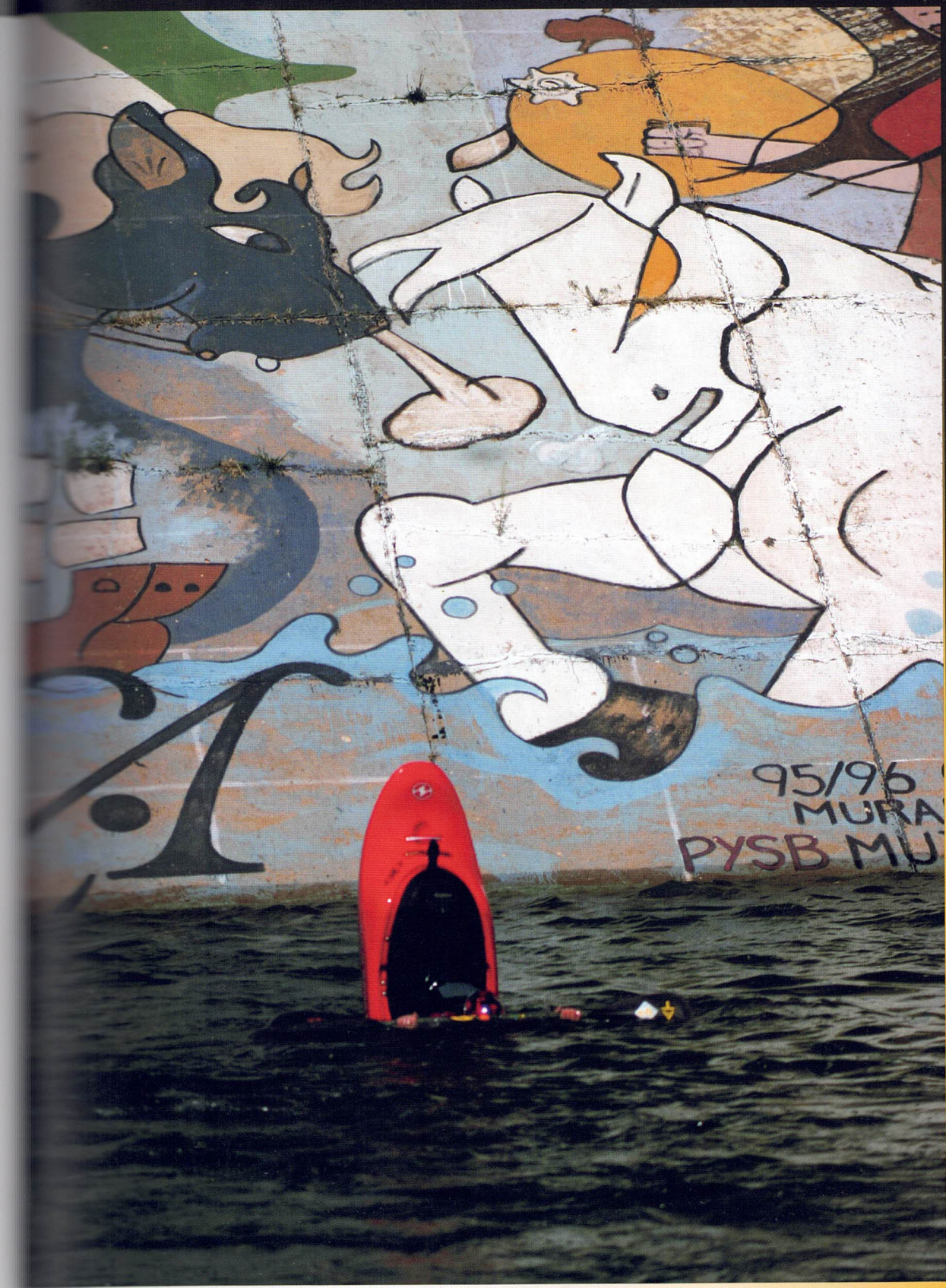
Directions: From I-25, take the 1st Street exit, and then turn left onto S Union Ave. Cross the bridge (features visible upstream), and immediately turn right onto Corona Ave. Park here, or weave through the neighborhood and park on the upstream side of the features, just downstream of the Lincoln St. bridge. All of the parking and trails are on river right.



Dave Bumgarner ♦ Pueblo scenery

Dave Bumgarner 🚶 Maggie Haynes ♦ afternoon surf at #4

THE ARKANSAS RIVER IS TRANSFORMED INTO A DITCH AS IT CRUISES THROUGH DOWNTOWN PUEBLO, WHERE EIGHT FEATURES ATTRACT FREESTYLE PADDLERS, AND THE WORLD'S LARGEST MURAL DECORATES THE SHORE.

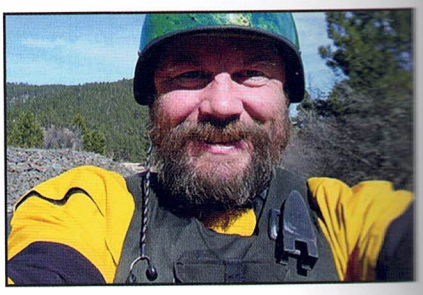


MARK COHEN ↑ BROOK AITKEN ↓ STERN STALL, NEXT TO THE LARGEST MURAL IN THE BOOK OF GUINNESS

Bighorn Mountains

Aaron Mulkey ♦Hwy 16, sunrise on the way to Todd's memorial

If you can be in love with a river, then I'm in love with Clear Creek.



By Dan Crain

Clear Creek sits in the southeast section of the Bighorn Mountains. Buffalo, a town of 3300 people is a good base camp for a Clear Creek excursion. Clear Creek is 160 miles west of Spearfish SD and 157 miles Southeast of Billings MT just off of Interstate 90. Many experienced boaters traveling to the great paddling in Montana or the Northwest have passed this area unaware of the truly awesome gem dropping off of the east face of 12,348' Mathers Peak.

The north, middle and south forks of Clear Creek merge and the action starts soon after. The Camp Comfort section begins below the private corporate retreat of Camp Comfort. This 4.2 mile class V action-packed run is mostly of pool and drop nature although some of the rapids are long and complex. You'll begin with a two mile class III warm up, followed by at least ten class V drops. The Mosier Gulch section can be tacked on adding another 3.25 miles of continuous class IV whitewater or can be run independently for those paddlers wishing to avoid bigger Class V drops. A predominately class III section of 5.1 miles begins with a steeper mile of class IV, and then mellows to steep class III as it cruises through Buffalo, WY. Happy Paddling.

The Canyon

Let me start off by saying that Camp Comfort is anything but comfortable—unless you enjoy the steeps in a tight canyon. Say hallelujah, Camp comfort is the stuff. I sit here at my computer for ten-months of the year waiting for Camp Comfort to run. Well actually for all of the Bighorns to run. If you drive like I do, Buffalo is only two-hours west of Spearfish on I-90. If Clear Creek is at 1.8' on the gauge the trip will be cut to an hour and 45 minutes. Needless to say I wait patiently for the Bighorns to melt and melt they do. You can count on the Bighorns peaking yearly around the end of May, first of June. It's almost clockwork. The area rivers peak annually between May 28th-June 3rd, so plan any trips to this area accordingly.

Todd Andrew, Dan Murray, and I made the first descent of Clear Creek. We made our exploratory run in June of 1999 at about 1.6' on the gauge. We weren't really in the best boats at the time, two Stubbys and a Jive, but we were exploring and livin' large. We did a lot of scouting that day. It was very eerie out—complete with rain, thunder and lighting in the canyon. It gave us all a sense of wonder and expectation for what lay around the next bend. That day, after the river became increasingly steep and wood was becoming a major factor, we decided just above Turnback that we had had enough. Looking downstream into the frothy mist we began our class V hike to the highway. I don't recommend the three-hour portage when you arrive at Turnback. Continue on—it's really fun.

The next winter Todd and myself spent some time in the canyon, cutting out wood and connecting the dots. We had either boated or hiked the entire canyon (at times through 2' of snow). On May 19th of 2000 the creek was running at .8' on the gauge. It was calling our names and we were listening. After throwing down on the pile at Tom's Diner, and many cups of the famous Killer Coffee, we found two local boys to set shuttle for us and we were on the water, full of excited anticipation for what lay ahead.

The day was beautiful—clear blue skies and 70°, but there is still a certain feeling about boating into water that you've never done before, or that has never been done before. It's hard to describe exactly what that feeling is. But it's that feeling that many people live

CFS	0.7'<min<1.0'<best 1.6'<high
Class	0.7'<V- 1.0'<V<1.6'<V+
Quality	★★★★ ?
Gradient	290 fpm max, 170 avg
Length	4.2 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	Buffalo Foot Gauge
Put-in	Camp Comfort
Take-out	Mosier Gulch

Dan Crain ♦ self-portrait of the "Badass Butterfly"

for. It's that feeling of exploration, of nervous excitement about not knowing, it's about looking inside of yourself, knowing your skill level, and matching that with what the water asks of you. It's about being so focused that no other thoughts except the task at hand can enter your mind. It's about pushing and expanding your limits. Plain and simple it's about living and it's the best feeling in the world.

We were off and on our way. Knowing that the first two-miles were easier warm-up we tried to relax and loosen up a little. One mile into the run we came upon a dead antelope washed up on a boulder in the middle of the stream. Todd eddied out right below it and I stopped above it. Not a word was spoken but we looked at each other and knew what the other was thinking. Not a good sign. As Todd looked into the eyes of this dead animal and was feeling a sense of loss for it, an American Dipper (the friend of all kayakers) flew right up to the boulder that the antelope was on and did his famous little two-step, looked at Todd and told him that everything would be fine—that all was okay. Knowing that Dippers never lie, we took the bird's word and proceeded on.

The first named rapid that you'll want to scout is Little A. It comes up on a 90°, left turn, two-miles into the run. There is a big talus slope on river-right that marks this rapid as well. Little A is fairly straightforward. It consists of a series of three ledges with the last ledge the stickiest. This rapid is named because it reminds one of Adrenaline on the upper Clarks Fork except much smaller, or it might be named after the little dead Antelope that we encountered on our way in. You'll have about 300-yards of boogie water before you encounter the rapid named Wood. Many of these names may change in the next couple of months. Todd and myself never really got around to finalizing all the rapid names. So the names may change to protect the innocent, but the rapids remain the same. Wood Rapid, as the name implies, is a place that wood likes to collect. The rapid comes up on you fairly quick as the river begins a turn to the right. You'll want to scout river-left. The entrance used to be blocked by a nasty spruce strainer, but ten-minutes with a pocket saw and Todd had the tree out of the way. The hydraulics of this rapid are not of huge concern but the river widens out here and the rapid becomes quite bony. At higher levels a river left channel will open up. In the bony area is where we've had problems with wood collecting. Definitely scout this one. One hundred yards further on your journey brings you to Ledge Island. Above this series of three ledges with a bouldery run-out you'll find yourself sitting in a large river-right eddy looking downstream at the lip of the first drop. Many boat scout, but if in doubt ferry over to the island and have a look. The run out is of concern because you want to catch the river-right eddy at the bottom. Use this eddy to scout Turnback rapid, The Needle, and to portage some wood. As of June 2001 there is a mandatory portage around a strainer at the bottom of Ledge Island, directly above Turnback. Don't miss the eddy, the strainer is clean as far as strainers go, but it is still a strainer. Hopefully we'll be able to get it out of there this year. At Turnback the river smashes into a headwall, turns 90° to the river-right and drops off a 5' ledge. The river-left side forms a recirculating eddy that usually contains logs, branches, and other floating debris. Portage the strainer and put in right above Turnback ledge, this will lead you right into the Needle. Thread the needle and the bigger stuff is over for a while. When you see a sheer cliff face covered with orange/yellow lichen on the left side you're very close to Chainsaw. I believe there are two smaller eddies on river-right in which to scout this drop. At the bottom of Chainsaw there used to be a massive ponderosa strainer, but three hours of work with two saws and it's no longer a problem. The river at Chainsaw narrows down and drops 8' or so off a sloping ramp into a pool followed soon by a smaller ledge. Eddy out below this drop and take in the canyon scenery.

Directly below Chainsaw is the Sieve. This rapid is hard to scout properly, and should be scouted before running Chainsaw. After running Chainsaw you can get a look from the river-left side by doing a little climbing. There is a sieve in the rocks on the river-left side about halfway through this drop. I usually start center, drive right and catch a boof off the river-right rock at the bottom of the rapid. Fifty-yards leads to a blind right turn called Bouncing Balls. Scout this rapid on river-right. Bouncing Balls is a long, fun, bouncy, read-and-run rapid. Bounce your way down a hundred yards or so, make the big boof moves as you round the left hand turn, and enjoy the ride. The last quarter-mile of the run is Boogie World. This section contains a few bigger drops mingled in with a lot of fun read-and-run stuff. Keep an eye out for wood and boogie on down to the take-out at the serious low-head dam if the gate is open. If the gate is locked continue on to Mosier Gulch picnic area. This run can be linked up with the Mosier section, to add a couple of miles of fun class IV. I hope you enjoy the run.

Directions: To reach the take-out, travel west on Hwy 16 seven-miles or so to the Mosier Gulch picnic area. Park at the locked gate or travel on up to the end of the road at the mouth of the canyon. To find the put-in travel back out from the picnic area, turn left on highway 16, and continue three-miles west to a small gravel road that angles up to the top of a ridge. Once on the ridge, park at the cattle guard at the private property boundary. Hike down the left side of the fence line on Forest Service ground to the creek.

Mosier Gulch Section

The Mosier Gulch Section of Clear Creek is a great place to begin your paddling in the Bighorns. This section is not too difficult for most paddlers and gives you a taste of what the area has to offer.

I have run this as low as 0.8' on the gauge, and while this is slightly bony it was still a good time. An ideal level for your first time down would be around 1.3', when most of the rocks will be underwater and the hydraulics very manageable. As the level approaches 2' on the gauge, the action comes very fast and has been described as a mini version of the North Fork of the Payette. The run is very continuous with most of the action taking place within the second and third miles. There are only three rapids that one might bother to name. Everything else just runs together, with one small drop followed by another and another.

If you're looking at the creek and wondering if your skill level might not be up to the challenge ahead, I would recommend hiking up to the put-in, because if you have problems in the first-mile you can take out at the put-in vehicle. If the river is pumping, sometimes we'll skip the first-mile and run laps on the bottom two-miles. There are lots of great play spots although eddy service is lacking. Catch a hole, link a few ends, and look for the next spot. Wood is a very real concern so stay heads up. We try to keep it clean, but every year it seems that two or three new strainers are added to the mix.

Gauge: A visual foot gauge in downtown Buffalo, WY. Look under the Main St bridge, on river right. There isn't a realtime gauge, but use Tensleep as a barometer. If Tensleep is high, then Clear Creek is probably a go.

Directions: To find the put-in drive about seven-miles west of Buffalo on highway 16 to the recreation sign that reads Mosier Gulch picnic area. Drive down the dirt road to the creek. If your lucky, the gate across the road that follows the creek upstream will be unlocked. If so, drive to the end of the road and put-in below the low head dam. If you're not lucky, park at the gate and hike one-mile upstream along the road to the put-in. If you're not one for hiking, or if the river looks like it's pumping, you can skip the first-mile and put-in at the locked gate. You'll miss some fun but most of the action occurs in the second and third mile.

CFS	0.8'<min<1.3'<best 1.9'<high
Class	1.3'<IV<1.9'<V-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	180 fpm avg
Length	3.25 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	Buffalo Foot Gauge
Put-in	Mosier Gulch + hike
Take-out	Old Power Station

Drive five-miles west of town to a pull out with a huge cottonwood tree shading the area. This is the take-out, and just past the city water treatment plant. As you continue uphill to the put-in, you'll notice an old abandoned farmhouse and a road that leads to the creek. This is the actual road that you'll walk out on. It's a hundred yards or so from the cottonwood tree pullout. When your on the creek you'll notice the take-out by this old gothic looking electrical power station and a USGS green gauge on river left or if you'd like continue on, the Main street bridge in town is only five-miles further down. Paddle on dude. Yeah, sweet.

Town Section

Let me begin here by saying that I haven't run this section of creek, so I can't describe it. I have scouted though, so I'll give you the beta that I have collected thus far.

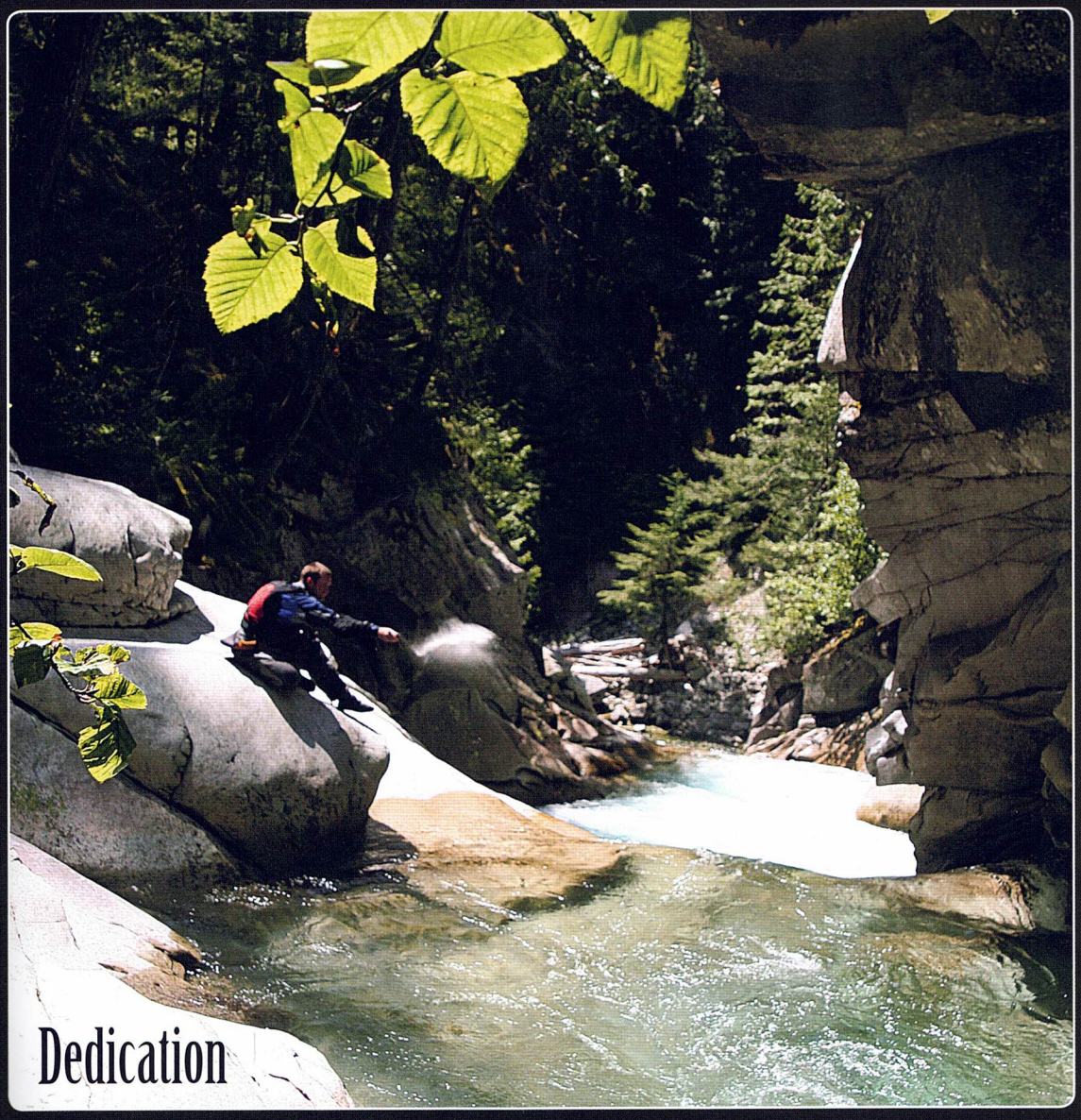
Looking downstream from the take-out of the Mosier Gulch section I expected the creek to get easier the further downstream you travel. I was surprised when I calculated that the first mile was at 200 fpm. Had I known, I would have explored it already. Since access on the lower run is poor, I had always taken out at the Old Power Station. But at 200 fpm it is a little steeper than the second mile of the Mosier section.

So the first mile should definitely be the toughest and the closer you get to town the easier it should become. Wood could pose a problem in this section as well, and there is a chance that the creek could contain a few fences. For those wishing to avoid the first two-miles there are other put-ins available near Buffalo. Drive through City Park and follow the paved roads upstream on the river right side for some alternatives.

There are numerous take-outs below town. The section from Main street to the Highway 16 bridge, just east of the Cenex station, would add two-miles of 50 fpm average. Know your limits and get exploring!

-Dan Crain (both)

CFS	0.7'<min<1.3'<best
Class	IV-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	200 fpm, 90 fpm avg
Length	5 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	Buffalo Foot Gauge
Put-in	Old Power Station
Take-out	Buffalo City Park



Dedication

The Bighorns stretch nearly 100 by 40 miles and contain many small volume creeks of class IV to V difficulty. Most of these creeks have been explored by two dedicated paddlers from South Dakota, Todd Andrew and Dan Crain. Their exploration, which began in 2001, uncovered such classics as upper Ten Sleep, South Fork of the Tongue, Paintrock, and Clear Creek. Despite the great efforts of others to uncover the information on the Bighorns, much of the beta for paddling in the range was lost with the passing of Todd and Dan. Dan lost his life in 2003 while paddling in The Clarks Fork Box and Todd Andrew drowned while paddling the Potomac River in 2004.

Dan's death was particularly close to me. I was part of a group of seven that missed the last portage in The Box, in which we were all flushed into a monstrous cascade. It's amazing that more of us didn't die that day. Misjudgments and mistakes happen in life, and in kayaking, and we suffer the consequences. Sometimes we walk away with a bruise and a shattered ego, and other times we don't walk away.

Losing a loved one or friend is hard. Kayaking is often to blame and I've seen many kayakers quickly lose interest in the sport after a death. Some return to running hard whitewater, and others never do. The irony is that many

Shane Robinson Todd Gillman spreading Charlie Beavers ashes on Rogers Creek, BC

of the moments in which we enjoy life the most come on a river. A smile plastered across a face in the pool below a falls, the soul-cleansing feeling of paddling a new river, or the accomplishment of reaching the take-out tends to bring out the best in people. Even midway through an epic hike-out, a sense of joy for the unordinary can be felt. Few sports match the camaraderie felt on a river trip.

This book is dedicated to the many others we've lost. These are our friends and we miss them.

Dan Crain & Todd Andrew

This chapter is dedicated to Dan and Todd, and this chapter's run descriptions are filled with stories about them.

Adam Barron

I paddled with Adam many times and I don't think we ever planned any trip more than a few hours in advance. It's probably why I don't remember my first trip with him, or my last. Odds are we talked briefly as we scrambled out of work, or other life responsibilities, to meet at a given location and time. One of my favorites was a Bear Creek run at 6:30 pm. Neither of us had run it and we arrived with the sun already behind the Front Range horizon. We rarely eddied, save one scout at the diversion dam. It was minutes from dark, but we still tried to make the push into Morrison. A few corners later I eddied out above a barely visible horizon line.

"Adam?" I yelled.

"I'm right here," he said from an eddy a few feet away from me.

We hiked out in complete darkness, laughing about it the entire way into Morrison. Adam rallied hard at the drop of a hat, and he crushed the stereotype that a nine-to-fiver can't hang. He led. Look for his plaque on the South Saint Vrain.

Charlie Beavers

The first time I met Charlie was inconsequential. He was just an awkward, quiet Colorado kid at Gore Fest, at a time when not many kids had even heard of kayaking. In my mind it was, "Interesting kid, rippin' paddler, memorable name... duly noted". The next time I met Charlie in earnest, a couple years later, he had already made a name for himself in freestyle and creekboating, and I was working at a kayak shop in WV. He more or less moved to town to kayak and an unlikely friendship developed. Charlie had a habit of making a horrible first impression, a habit I both loathed and loved. But anyone who was willing to dig a little deeper was rewarded with getting to know an uncommonly intelligent and independent thinker, a humble, loyal and generous friend, and a joker with a fierce and quick wit. When I think of Charlie's legacy, it's easy to focus on kayaking— the kid was as gifted and graceful on the water as anyone who's ever picked up a paddle— but his biggest gift to me, apart from the memories, was, and still is, a reminder to never take life for granted, and to never ever take it too seriously either.

-Todd Gillman

Damon Miller

I've heard many stories about Damon, and all of them portray him as a badass. Lapping the Embudo at high flow, poaching in Yellowstone or bombing Jacobs Ladder on the NF Payette are things that most mere mortals may never do, yet Damon ran them solo. One story that stands out is a trip gone awry in Peru where Damon jumped out of a moving train onto a steep scree slope to retrieve a boat that they had lost the day before. His words at the put-in of Pandoras Box are fitting, and I'll always remember the day that I paddled with him. He was solid, and we followed.

Daniel DeLaVergne

Possibly the most creative personality to ever don a pfd, Daniel DeLaVergne was as modest as he was amped to make his friends famous. DeLaVergne was easily one of my greatest river running influences before even having met him. I was instantly drawn to his style from the time I first saw a Lunch Video Magazine VHS playing in the local kayak shop. He was the idea behind the expedition, behind the camera, behind the contest—from his early days on the Riot Bus to T-Dubs single day descent of the Stikine. With the start of The Vacation to Hell Contest, Daniel DeLaVergne will live on in kayaking lore for generations to come. "You only get one chance to run a drop blind."

James McFarland

I did not know him, but he saved my life. In a way, he has not stopped saving my life since that fateful day we did two laps on the Upper Taos Box. He was a friend of a close friend that paddled class V. That was all I needed to know about him. James was like you and me. Paddling was not something he just did, it was part of who he was.

We were almost done with the second lap of the day when I pinned. We attached a rope to my quick-release and decided it was best that I pull skirt and hope for the best. I came up from the darkness gasping for air and reaching for a body. My hands landed on James, and he had pulled me from the unknown. The bond was cemented.

A month or so of creeking in Cali goes by and I get word that the man who saved my life, had lost his doing what we

all love most. My heart sank because I was not there to be the body he grabbed onto, but maybe more importantly it was because a sport that I had based my life around had now taken a life that was close to me. Class V is at times a hard place to paddle. The rewards are greater then words, but the price can leave you humbled and broken. I will be forever indebted to James for teaching me that lesson. I just wish he did not have to pay the ultimate price to teach me. Thank you James.

-Patrick Forster

Max Sullivan

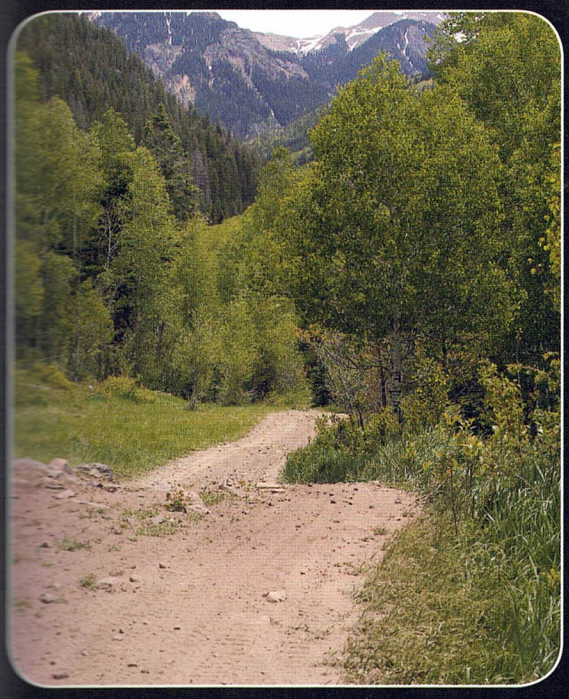
Sully knew that life was about living every day like it's your last. At the height of his creek running days he was running shit that few paddlers wanted pieces of. His main downfall here though, was that a good portion of it was not in his boat. At the height of his game, for lack of better words, Max amassed fifteen swims in one season, fourteen of which were on class five or higher. "It's fucked up Bro" he said, "I look at a rapid and I see the line to boat and then I look for a good swim line". I can say I've met boaters better than the Chunderboy, but I can't say I've ever met anyone with more heart than that damn kid!

-Jared Johnson

Paul Zirkelbach

Brightest blue eyes, and a laugh that was contagious and sometimes scary. Zirk was a true hardcore paddler, the big brother, and always the joker. I've never seen someone so relaxed while paddling the hardest rapids the planet had to offer. He loved to kayak, he loved the people he surrounded himself with, the places he went, the stories he heard, and things that scared everybody else. He dedicated his life to his passion and was the who's who of kayaking in the 80's and early 90's. He died at 50 in a V+ drop, last seen smiling as he entered the rapid. Three weeks prior to his death I watched him run a 10' to 40' double drop on the Little North Fork of the Feather. Early in our descent of the Little North Fork we grew tired of scouting and agreed to give verbals, but every time I scouted I had to signal for him to take a look. This went on for two days until finally I was tired, scared and wanted to be done. As he started to peel out to run another big drop I asked "When does this thing let up?" As he paddled away he laughed and said, "At the take-out!" I hope to see him at the take-out again sometime. I miss and loved that man.

-Gary Edgeworth



Russell Kelly

I met him on OBJ, and the very next day I was running the Middle Ruby Fork with him. A scout of the third cascade revealed an ugly drop and Russell decided to charge the horrible river-left portage while smoking a cigarette. His stories of expeditions never cease to amaze. He paddled around the world, often set out on his own and paddled class V expedition runs solo. I imagine him deep in the most treacherous river canyon, solo and portaging with a cigarette hanging off the edge of a glowing smile. When he gets to the take-out, he'll be yelling "BEER HERE!" to the sleeping campers in his best accent, passing coals around the campfire, and once again spreading his infectious smile to the rest of the group. He was truly an inspiration.

Toby Scarpella

The river is a special place that brings many of us joy and happiness, love and compassion, a place where we can truly find ourselves. This was certainly true of Toby. Toby represented this connection with the river. He danced with the river honestly and its beauty shined through his blue eyes, his rusty red hair and his freckled skin. Toby lived his life with constant flowing excitement and energy, like a teapot reaching its boiling point. His spirit poured out in harmonic whistles of generosity seen vividly upon each of his shoe-less returns from Latin America. In his memory, and in his shoes, we have learned to try and live every day fully and freely, with the fragility of life bearing down and reminding us how precious every moment is.

-Brian & Alison Scarpella, and Brad Higinbotham

SF Tongue & Shell Creek

Tongue River

The Tongue flows east through the northern Bighorns. We know almost nothing about the Tongue and what it has to offer, but we've managed to piece together limited beta from a few known descents. This is a great place to test your adventure boating and map reading skills, and to practice getting lost.

The Tongue Canyon section is a 2.3-mile hike-to run upstream of the Tongue Canyon CG. Paddlers that lug their boats to Sheep Creek will be rewarded with an open canyon of class IV-V difficulty. The middle section from the South Fork Tongue take-out to the Tongue Canyon put-in contains a Box Canyon that, to our knowledge, has not been paddled. This 500 fpm section may or may not be runnable.

With steep drops and great scenery, the Upper South Fork offers exciting wilderness paddling. The run starts with a quick flatwater float before arriving at a very obvious canyon and hard right turn. Be sure to scout this rapid, as it is one of the longest and most complex. From this point on take a deep breathe and prepare to paddle two miles of some of the best non stop class IV-V in the Bighorn Range. The run flattens, and a woody paddle out leads to Prune Creek CG.

Directions: For the Upper South Fork, take out east of Burgess Junction on Hwy 14 at the Prune Creek CG. To reach the put-in, drive south from Burgess Junction on Hwy 14, then left on FH 26. Take FH 26 east to the bridge over the South Fork. For the Tongue Canyon run, start in Dayton, and drive west on Rd 92 to the Tongue Canyon CG.

CFS	400<min<500<best
Class	V
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	190 fpm SF action 260 fpm Canyon
Length	6 miles SF 2.3 miles Canyon
Season	May to June
Gauge	Tongue Riv @ Dayton
SF Put-in	FH 26
SF Take-out	Prune Creek CG
Riv Access	Tongue Canyon CG

Shell Creek

Shell Creek avoided detection by kayakers for many years, and its a shame. Shell creek is a very remote wilderness run with committing gorges and long boulder garden rapids. The rock is generally smooth, and the technical lines that are required to make it down safely will test your dufek technique.

At the put-in it feels like a very typical mountain-meadow stream. After a mile it drops into one of the steepest sections of the run, the LTP Section. Named by Dan Crain and Todd Andrew, its hard not to imagine the two friends bombing down this unexplored stretch yelling out their favorite war cry. "LTP!" they'd say. Live to paddle.

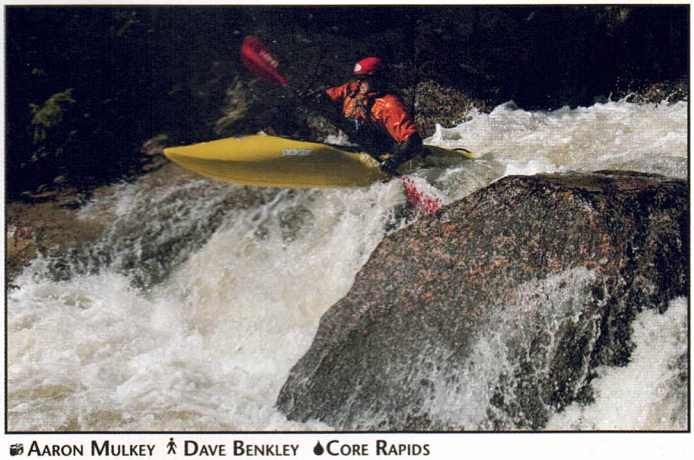
The run mellows below and you get a breather before entering the First Gorge, which can be best scouted on river right. Core Rapid is early in the gorge, and contains a tricky entrance to a 16' vert. The Second Gorge has a long series of six-to-eight foot ledge drops. Scout the entrance drop on river left. It's the only drop that you'll be able to see from this vantage. If it looks good, paddle the first drop and eddy out on river right to scout The Squeeze of the gorge. Many difficult rapids continue below the Second Gorge, but they spread-out and eventually cease at the take-out.

This run is a full day adventure filled with great drops and spectacular scenery.

Directions: From Shell take Hwy 14 east to a large pull-out a 1/4 mile above Shell Creek Falls. At the top of the pull-off there will be a dirt road that cuts down to the river. Pre-scout this take-out since Shell Creek Falls and the drop above it are NR. Continue east on Hwy 14 through the canyon, and turn south onto FH 17. Put-in at the bridge.

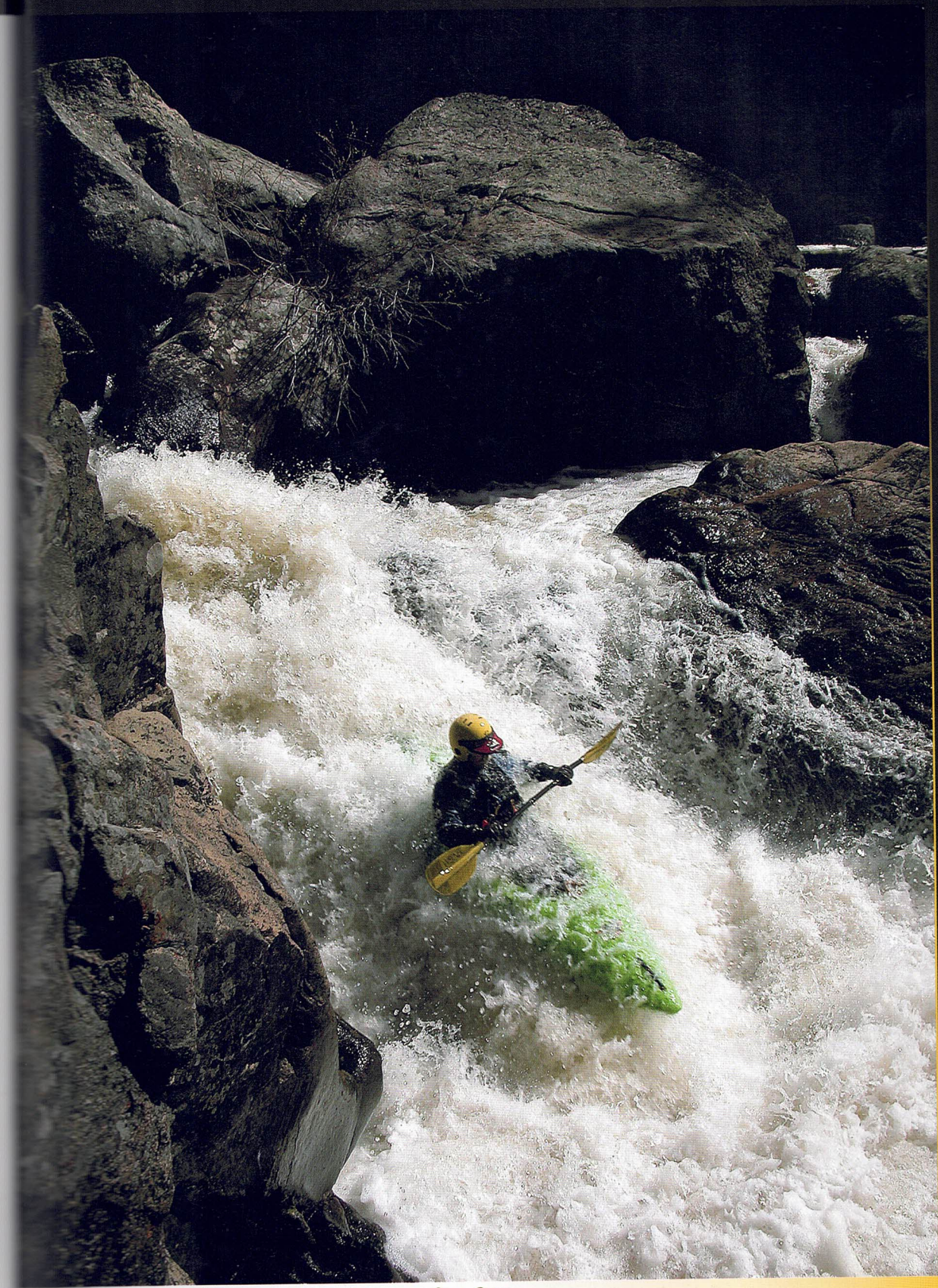
-Aaron Mulkey (both)

CFS	350<min<450<best
Class	V (V+ x2, P)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	200 fpm, 345 crux
Length	6.7 miles
Season	May to June
Gauge	Shell Crk abv Shell Res
Put-in	FH 17 Ranger Station
Take-out	above Shell Crk Falls



Aaron Mulkey Dave Benkley Core Rapids

Imagine two friends bombing down this unexplored stretch yelling out their favorite war cry. "LTP!" they'd say. Live to paddle.



Aaron Mulkey Ed Conning Core Rapids crux, Shell Creek

Paint Rock Creek

Paint Rock Creek was the first stop on the annual summer creeking odyssey in 2002. Myself and two good friends had blazed out of Virginia with big plans to run class V Wyoming and Montana creeks every day for weeks. We promised ourselves that there would be *no* rest days. We met up at Dan Crain's house in Spearfish after a 24-hour drive and the search for steep water began. Clear Creek was too low—Tensleep too high. Then, like Goldilocks on her third bowl of porridge, we found one that was "just right." Paint Rock was in. Todd Andrew and Dan took care of the details, so unfortunately I don't remember all of the logistics. We gained access permission at the ranch office near the take-out and headed up a dusty but gorgeous shuttle road to crash at a primo campsite. The next day was classic South Dakota Crew style—we began the one-mile hike to the put-in for the 12-mile run at around two pm. With an average gradient over 220 fpm, interlaced by several miles near 375 fpm, non-stop whitewater with wood in the blind turns.

None of us really knew the lines since this was only the third descent of the creek. I packed my headlamp. The walk down to the put-in below a huge cascade on the North Fork Paint Rock was stunning. The image of Dan carrying his creekboat across a flowery meadow with the snow capped Bighorns in the distance is stuck happily in my mind. The rest of the day is a blur. P-rock doesn't contain a single drop over eight-feet, just miles of boulders, boofs and small eddies. We scouted when things got too blind and portaged occasionally around wood. Within a few miles my boat was cracked and Josh had broken a paddle. The steepest section was in the mile or so above the main stem of P-rock. By dusk we were almost done. A close call above a huge log tempted some of us to start hiking along a trail on the right. Dan and Todd, who had done the creek before knew it was about to mellow out and kept going. They were in their element and loving it.

CFS	no clue
Class	V+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	220 fpm, 375 crux
Length	12 miles
Season	April to June
Gauge	visual foot gauge
Put-in	Private Ranch
Take-out	268 Rd Fish Hatchery

The next day—the second day of our big summer adventure was a rest day. I patched my boat, Josh hiked in to recover his broken paddle, Harris snoozed. Dan and Todd put the truck in 4WD and went to reconnoiter the main-stem of Paintrock, for a potential first-descent. LTP!

Gauge: River left bridge pylon of the Lower Nowood Road (43.5 Rd), 8 miles downstream of Hyattville. Visual barometer.

Directions: From Hyattville drive east on Hwy 31. Stay right as it turns into Rd 268, and eventually dead ends at a ranch. Ask permission to hike-in to the put-in. Take out at the fish hatchery off of Rd 268.

-Gordon Dalton

Tensleep Creek

Draining the west face of the Bighorns, Tensleep cascades through the surprisingly lush valley that Hwy 16 cuts through. Access is very convenient, free camping abundant, and the whitewater will keep the bone-zone paddler entertained. The average gradient is steeper than OBJ, and there's not a single vert over eight feet.

If you like steep boulder gardens this is your dream creek. There isn't a single piece of flatwater in the upper three-miles of the run. Only very confident read-and-run creekers will be able to get down the run with minimal scouts, since the entire run is basically one rapid. The gradient gets steeper and the river more committing after the gauge—take out at the first bridge if something doesn't feel right. The next three-miles contain some of the best paddling the Bighorns have to offer. This is the definition of high-quality mank. The bottom run is a good way to round out a day, as it ups the length to seven-miles. Then again, lapping the upper-half would also up the length to seven-miles.

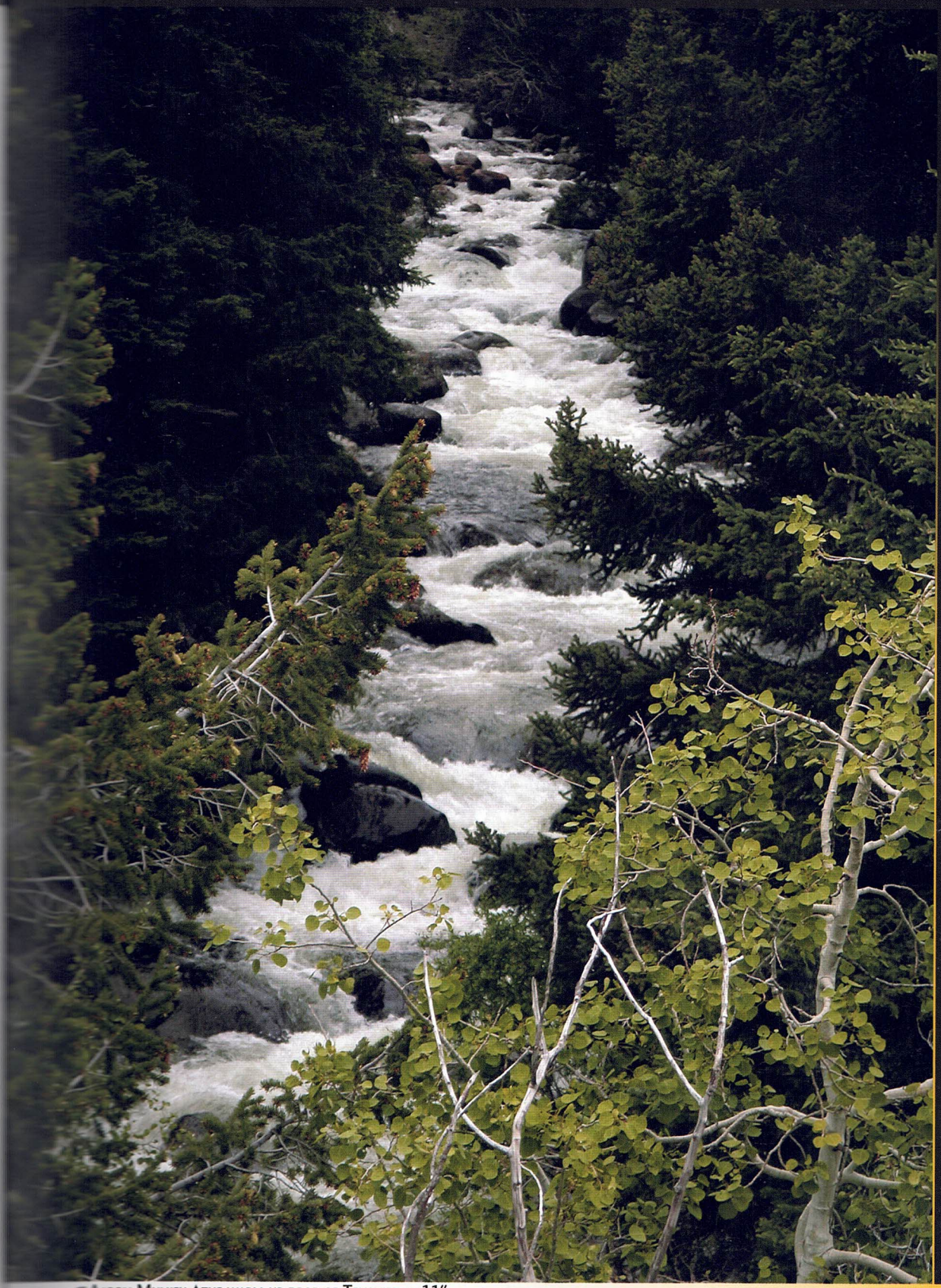
Gauge: Visual foot-gauge 50' downstream of the bridge at the top of the Hwy 16 switchbacks. You can use the Shell Creek above Shell Creek Reservoir as a barometer. Assume Tensleep is in if Shell is over 250 cfs.

Directions: The take-out is on Hwy 16, to the east of Tensleep at the Tensleep Fish Hatchery. Drive east up the switchbacks to the next bridge and check the level. Put-in a 1/2-mile upstream at the old bridge pylons. A halfway river access can be found at the bottom of the first switchback, which allows for a take-out after the upper three-mile long crux. Consider hanging a shirt on a tree to mark the spot.

-Aaron Mulkey

CFS	11"<min 1'2"<optimal<1'5"
Class	V<1'5"<V+
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	450 fpm top half
Length	3.5 miles or 7 miles
Season	April to June
Gauge	visual foot gauge or Shell Crk barometer
Put-in	old bridge Pylons
Take-out	Fish Hatchery

A MILE-LONG HIKE-IN TO THE PUT-IN OF A TWELVE-MILE RUN, WITH AN AVERAGE GRADIENT OVER 200 FPM, INTERLACED BY SEVERAL MILES NEAR 400 FPM, NON-STOP WHITEWATER WITH WOOD IN THE BLIND TURNS.



AARON MULKEY ♦THE WARM-UP DROP OF TENSLEEP AT 11"

Cache La Poudre

©Karpilo Photography/karpilo.com JJ Hannah Whiteline, Gnarrows Race

North Fork

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	150	200	350	450
Character	bony	mellow creek	open boofs	yessss...
Upper Class	III+ (IV)	IV- (IV)	IV (V-)	IV (V-)
Lower Class	not running	III-	III	III
Upper Quality	★	★★	★★★	★★★
Lower Quality	not running	★	★★	★★
Gradient	60 fpm upper, 30 fpm lower			
Remoteness	high, but escape through private property possible			
Hitchability	poor			
Length	9 miles upper, 11 miles lower			
Season	early peak, May			
Gauge	upper is visual, USGS 06751490 NF Poudre near Livermore for lower			
Put-in	public access near Trails End Ranch upper, Livermore Bridge lower			
Take-out	Halligan Reservoir upper, Filter Plant lower			

So you're in the Poudre drainage and you want to do some easy creeking. If it's early season and spring snows have hit the low elevations in Larimer County then the North Fork might be a great option. The upper run of this low elevation tributary cuts through a neat open canyon with the characteristic granite domes of the Red Feather Lakes area. The lower run traverses a small wilderness type area with scenic attributes more typical of the main Poudre area.

Upper Run

Finding the combination of enough water to thoroughly enjoy this stretch and an unlocked gate to the take-out road for this run can be a challenge. The gate that you are interested in is to the Middle Cherokee Park public access road managed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. A call to the Division should reveal the status of the gate which is usually open by late May. Desperate Fort Collins boaters who did not check the status of the gate have walked out from the take-out road to the gate—those who have walked it will never walk it again (five miles of hilly road).

The other challenge to this run is avoiding the lure of putting in at the Trails End Bridge. Though this access, in my opinion, is legal under Colorado State Law, it is also a near sure way to enter into a face to face debate about it with a gun-toting survivalist. The best access and easiest way to avoid local confrontations with these notoriously jealous land guardians is to park at the public access parking just beyond the bridge and to hike about one mile around the private property to the river.

Putting in below the hike avoids a portage or two and sacrifices little whitewater. The meat of the run consists of a few long class IV- rapids and one nice 10 foot waterfall and V- rapid. This is a great place to take your first official creek run, work on your heads up skills, and run your first small waterfall in a beautiful and remote setting.

Lower Run

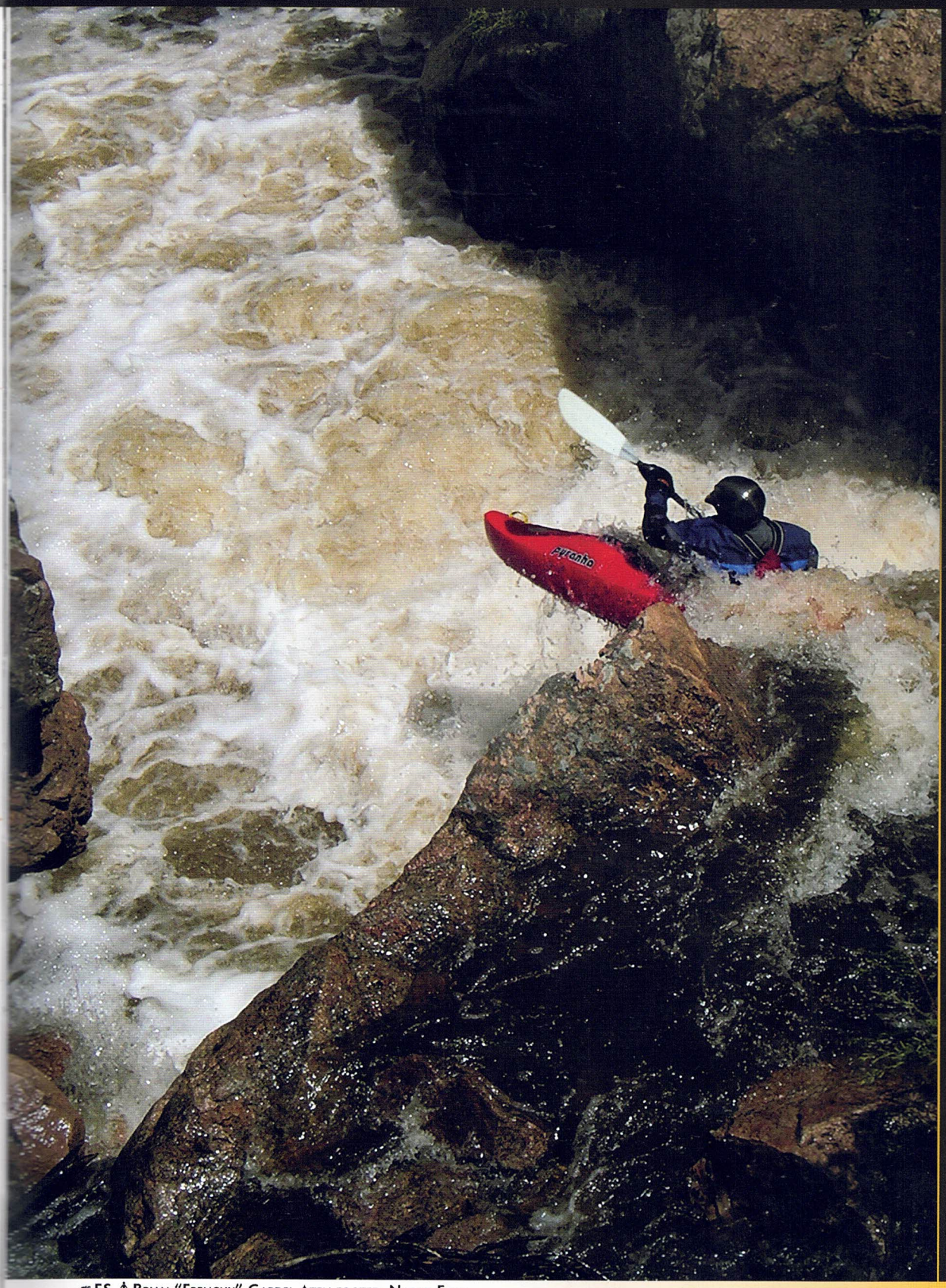
At flood levels this is a fun and scenic class III stomp from the bridge just west of Livermore on the Red Feather Lakes Rd to the confluence with the main Poudre. A paddle across Seamen Reservoir and then a portage around the dam is required near the end of the run. Below the dam there is an awesome wave at ultra high flows. One mile of boating leads to the confluence and the put-in for the Filter Plant run.

Directions

To get to the take-out for the upper run, turn west off of Hwy 287 onto Cherokee Park Road, a few miles North of Livermore. Find Middle Cherokee Park, turn right and cross through the hopefully open access gate. Take the right fork and then veer right again further on down the road. Park at the furthest North point of Halligan Resevoir, around five miles from the gate. To get to the upper put-in drive back to Cherokee Park Road and head north until you cross a bridge over the North Fork at the Trails End Ranch. Park a ¼ mile past this bridge at the obvious public parking and trailhead. Follow the trail above the river and private land about a mile southeast before the trail drops down to the river and your put-in.

The put-in for the lower run is on the Red Feather Lakes Road just west of Livermore, at the bridge over the river. Take out at the put-in for the Filter Plant, or the take-out for a longer run.

TRICKY ACCESS AND HARD TO CATCH FLOWS GUARD THIS EASY CREEK RUN LOCATED IN THE GRANITE-DOME COUNTRY SURROUNDING RED FEATHER LAKES.



ES BRIAN "FRENCHY" GARDEL TEN FOOTER, NORTH FORK

Filter Plant

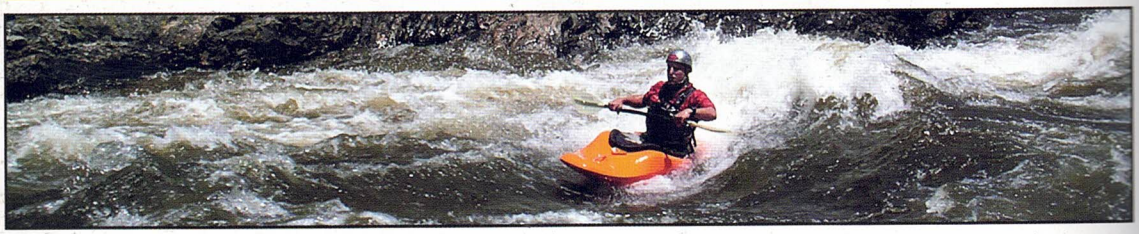
This is Northern Colorado's classic beginner run. Mostly class II with a spice of easy class III thrown in to keep you on your toes or to flip those whose combat roll is not quite seasoned yet. Mad Dog, otherwise known as Frothing Chihuahua, is the rapid of note here. Don't expect the difficulty to live up to its name, since a few forward strokes will get the unstable through safely.

The first few rapids and turns of this run can also trip up the unsuspecting newbie. Many new rocks were pushed into the river following a massive rock slide in the summer of 2000, creating a short class III maze. When the high water ends, the well-defined eddies further improve what is already a good fishing stretch.

The scenery is superb, as it is throughout the canyon above. The filter plant on a hot day tends to draw an eclectic group. From the drunken under-garment-clad tubers to the first time kayakers, there is sure to be some kind of action unfolding.

Directions: The take-out is at the Picnic Rock River Access, the first developed river access near the canyon mouth. As of 2006 there is no fee. An alternative take-out is found at a small pull-off one hundred yards downstream near a popular swimming hole (eddy), but be sure you know where you are because of a dangerous diversion dam only a hundred yards further downstream. The put-in is found about three miles upstream, just west of mile-marker 117. There is a wooden stairway leading down to the river on the north side of the highway, but the parking is just west of these stairs on the south side.

CFS	170<min<650<best
Class	II<650<III-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	45 fpm
Length	2.5 miles
Season	May to August
Gauge	Poudre @ Canyon Mouth nr Ft. Collins
Put-in	Hwy 14 pulloff
Take-out	Picnic Rock Riv Access



Bridges Take-Out Wave (BTO)

The official park-and-play spot of the Poudre. This means very little in the way of epic play, but as a spot to learn the spin, cartwheel and blunt it serves its purpose well. Ideal flows are found at the height of the Bridges rafting season. Thus, there is an abundance of spectatorship from the heavy raft traffic. Late night barbeque and PBR are the norm at this unregulated river access point. If you are in the area looking for a paddling partner, this the first place I would head to.

Directions: On Hwy 14 about a mile upstream of the last diversion dam, at the take-out for the Bridges run.

CFS	2.2<optimal<3.5
Class	III
Eddy	fair
Quality	★★★
Season	May, June, July
Gauge	Pineview Gauge
Riv Access	BTO on Hwy 14

Ultimate Squirt Spot (USS)

Home of the Sonar Cup the USS is quite possibly the best deep squirt spot for serious down time in Colorado. Mystery magicians have been known to spend over 20 seconds below the crisp mountain run-off re-appearing with just enough time to ferry above the Groover rapid and slide back into the eddy. It is best at 1.8 to 2.5 on the Pineview Gauge but can provide entertainment down to pretty low flows. The plow to right spin will drop it like its hot. Break out the goggles, leave the pfd at home, and prepare to spend some quality time with the fishes.

Directions: Less than a mile above the Mishawaka on Hwy 14 there is a rounded pull-off on the outside of a left hand turn as you are driving upstream. A small jutt comes off the left shore funneling the current into a swirling whirlpool. There is a small relaxing beach just down from the parking.

CFS	1.8<optimal<2.5
Class	III
Eddy	good
Quality	★★★★★ (squirt)
Season	May to August
Gauge	Pineview Gauge
Riv Access	Hwy 14 abv Mish

ES Rob Hessman Poudre soul surf

From the drunken under-garment-clad tubers to the first time kayakers, there is sure to be some kind of action unfolding on the most popular beginner stretch in the Poudre drainage.

ES Phil, Angela, Ward, & Silas Filter Plant

Stevens Down

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Gauge Height	1.0′	1.5′	2.5′	3.5′
Approx. CFS	170	250	470	910
Character	Bridges only	scrape down	BTO wave in	loads of play
Class	III-	III	III (IV-)	III+ (multiple IV's)
Quality	★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	60 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	excellent			
Length	12 miles, shorter runs possible			
Season	May to August, maybe longer			
Gauge	Pineview Rock or Cache La Poudre at Canyon Mouth near Ft. Collins			
Put-in	Steven's Gulch, multiple options			
Take-out	Bridges Takout, multiple options			

The most popular stretches of Colorado's only federally designated Wild and Scenic River are found on this classic 12-mile stretch. The action begins directly following the lower narrows and ends at one of the Poudre's only true park-and-play spots, the Bridges Take-Out Wave (BTO).

Though an endless variety of put-ins and take-outs exist, a medium to high water run of the entire stretch can be completed in under a few hours and is worth the effort. The combination of rapids and downriver play will challenge the intermediate paddler while the advanced playboater will be entertained through a wide-array of quality rock splats, wave wheels and class III/IV meat lines.

Upper Mishawaka

The upper-most section begins at Steven's Gulch and ends at the quaint and first-rate Mishawaka Amphitheater. Aptly named, the upper is perhaps the most difficult section of the four, containing continuous class III+ rapids, with one or two class IV moves at moderate water levels. With increasing water the entire section becomes class IV in nature and swims can become prolonged and dangerous. Though this section is a few miles further from Fort Collins than the three below, it contains the best scenery that the lower Poudre has to offer and also affords the greatest chance for solitude.

Lower Mishawaka

Lower Mishawaka logically begins below the Mishawaka Amphitheater at the Dead Deer put-in and traditionally ends at the Hewlett's Gulch Trailhead. Higher take-outs are common due to flat and un-interesting boating in the mile or so above Hewlett's Gulch. Lower Mish is a solid class III outing at medium to high water and for those looking to cut their beginner to intermediate teeth on some actual rapids, this is a fine and generally overlooked stretch.

Poudre Park & Bridges

From Hewlett's Gulch down you will begin to encounter the afterwork crowd and also some great whitewater. Pineview Falls divides the bottom two runs, Poudre Park above and Bridges below, but every Poudre regular will attest to these put-ins and take-outs being non compulsory. Though the bottom section is referred to as Bridges, the Poudre Park section has equally as many bridges for which possibly a greater hazard is posed.

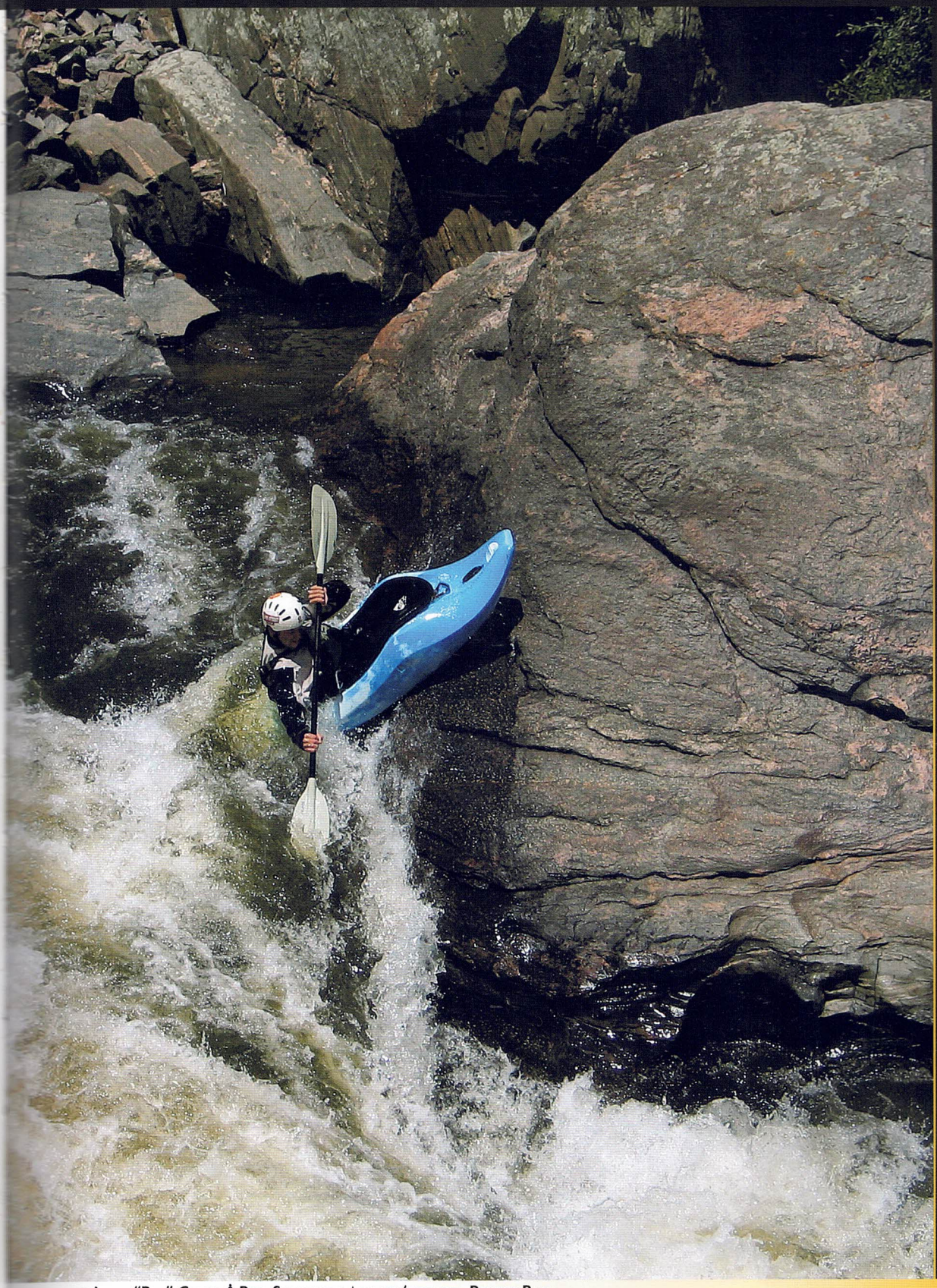
Pineview Falls is a perfect class IV stepping stone that will hand out a swift beating to those who show fear. Those who are able to master their fear will be rewarded with safe passage and bubbly (but likely short lived) egos. Grind the Disneyland Rock for the best splat we know. At medium to high flow Poudre Park is generally class IV in nature, while Bridges is generally class III to III+. With a little experimentation or a quick chat with any Poudre local, just about any paddler can find a Wild and Scenic Poudre Canyon section to their liking.

Pineview Gauge: There is a spray painted foot gauge at the top of Pineview Falls, on the downstream side of the river right house rock, with a Miyagi style pine tree growing out of it. This is the foot gauge referred to in the beta boxes of this chapter. The internet gauge is an inaccurate barometer for the main canyon.

Directions

The Bridges Take-Out (BTO) is found on Hwy 14 west of Ted's Place, at mm 114.7, a short mile from the last diversion dam on your way up the canyon. BTO is the local after run hang-out and there can be un-groomed raft guides, raft buses and a general carnival type atmosphere there, so be prepared. The private boater put-in is found at Upper Landing near mm 105.

Entertaining whitewater will challenge the intermediate paddler, while the advanced playboater will enjoy the wide array of rock splats, wave wheels, and III/IV meat lines.



Adam "Red" Crane Pete Stromberg splatin' granite, Poudre Park

Narrows

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Gauge Height	0.8′	1.25′	2.0′	3.0′
Approx. CFS	150	205	330	650
Character	jonesing	scrape thru middles	optimal	solid
Upper Class	V	V	V	V+
Middle Class	IV	IV	IV (IV+ x2)	IV+ (V- x2)
Lower Class	V-	V-	V	V+
Quality	★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	110 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good			
Length	3 miles, multiple options			
Season	May to August			
Gauge	Pineview Rock or Cache La Poudre at Canyon Mouth near Ft. Collins			
Put-in	Narrows Campground at top			
Take-out	Steven's Gulch Access Area at bottom			

The Narrows section of the Poudre is the Fort Collins after work special. The local favorite, period. It is spectacular, with 100 foot red granite cliffs framing the view. A few hair-raising drops, some classic class IV boogie, numerous put-in options and a wide range of runnable flows make the Narrows a truly great run. All three sections offer advanced whitewater and roadside access.

Upper Narrows

The action begins with Super Collider, a steep and sticky ledge-hole, backed up by a rectangular pin-rock. The run-out to Super Collider is not too challenging, but is fast and shallow and is called Cabbage Shredder. Keep your nose up. Next is a straight forward class IV rapid that can be entered from either side.

A short pool later you confront Whiteline, a powerful 50 yard constriction. This rapid has gone through some changes as of late, though the line has remained relatively the same. I continue to rehearse this line in the eddy above this drop, though I must have it thoroughly memorized by now. The final gradient, which was once a shallow cascade into an undercut rock, was recently converted into an 8′ waterfall by CDOT. This has fortunately made Whiteline an even more classic rapid, yet it has also given the narrows its new most stompy hole.

Middle Narrows

A few corners and you're safely into the Middle Narrows. Middles begins with a tough class IV+ drop called Sportscar Corner. Putting in at the top of this drop is a popular option, especially if not feeling up to the upper section (although parking is limited). Sportscar has some ugly pin potential, so be careful while weaving through. Some great boogie water leads to Green Bridge rapid. Green Bridge is home to the Poudre Groove Tube. This rapid has a straight forward line down the right. But to me the groove tube is where it's at. Start in the center and drop into the curler going left and ride the tube. Yeehaw! Once, around three feet on the gauge, I dropped into the tube and caught some serious downtime in a playboat. I went so deep that I felt my boat scraping along the bottom of the riverbed, before I was launched out of the hole in an airborne bow squirt. Get some, son.

Lower Narrows

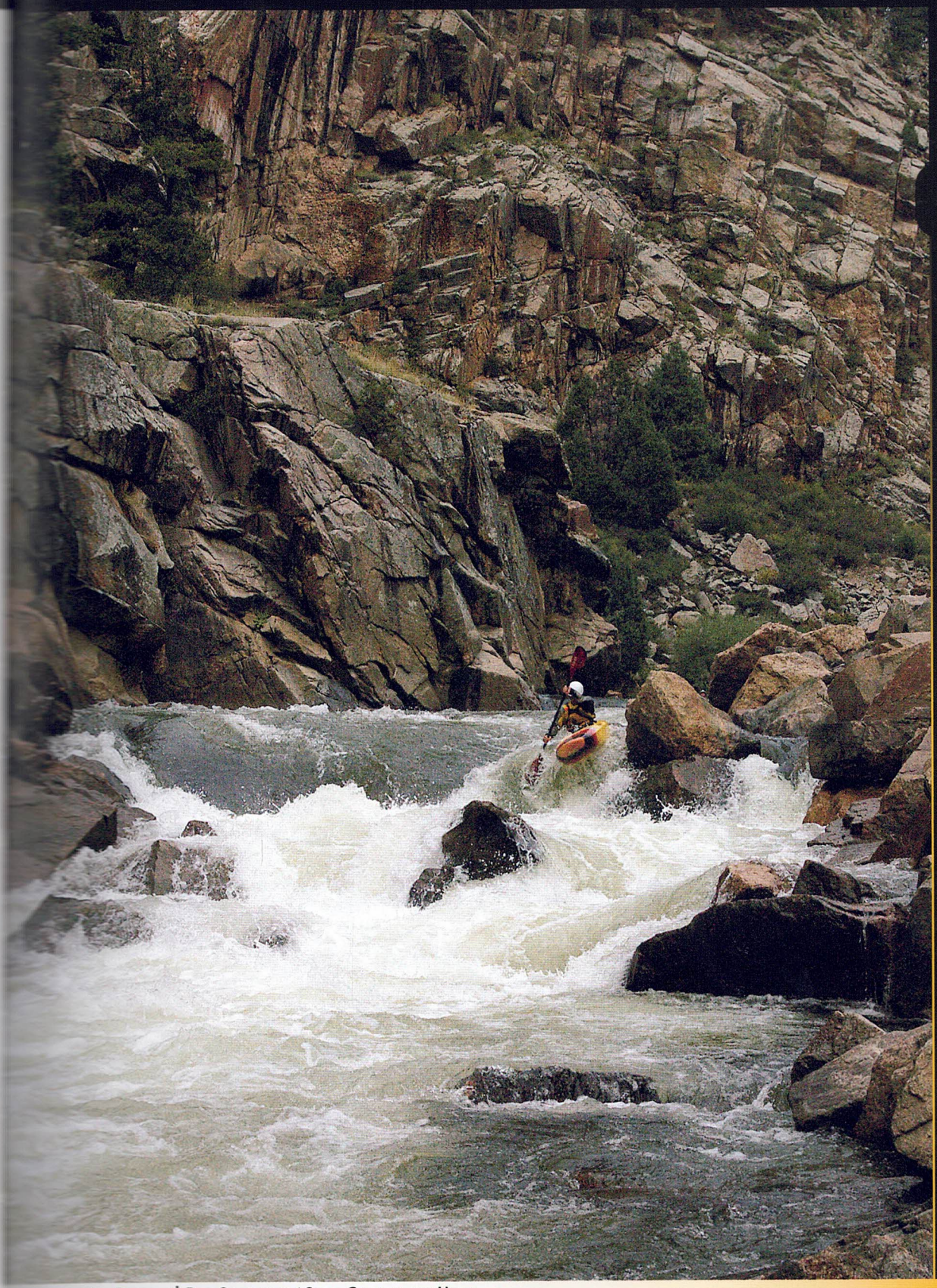
This is a long class V drop that gets very gnar-gnar at higher water levels. You know you're there when you cross under the highway and things start to look quite steep. There is a fantastic boof move to enter this rapid. Numerous lines exist, with the most popular starting on the right. At higher flows things happen very quickly and you're lucky if you're on line, a potential problem as a nasty hole develops towards the bottom on the right.

Pete's Advice: Remember to share the rivers equally with other users, including fisherman. Always, boof and release.

Directions

The take-out is at Steven's Gulch on Hwy 14, just west of Mishawaka at mm 105. Put-ins are highly variable and there are pull-outs which allow access to the river and particular rapids of interest throughout the stretch. There is a pull-out on the south side of the road just before the Narrows Campground near mm 102 that serves as an excellent put-in for the entire run.

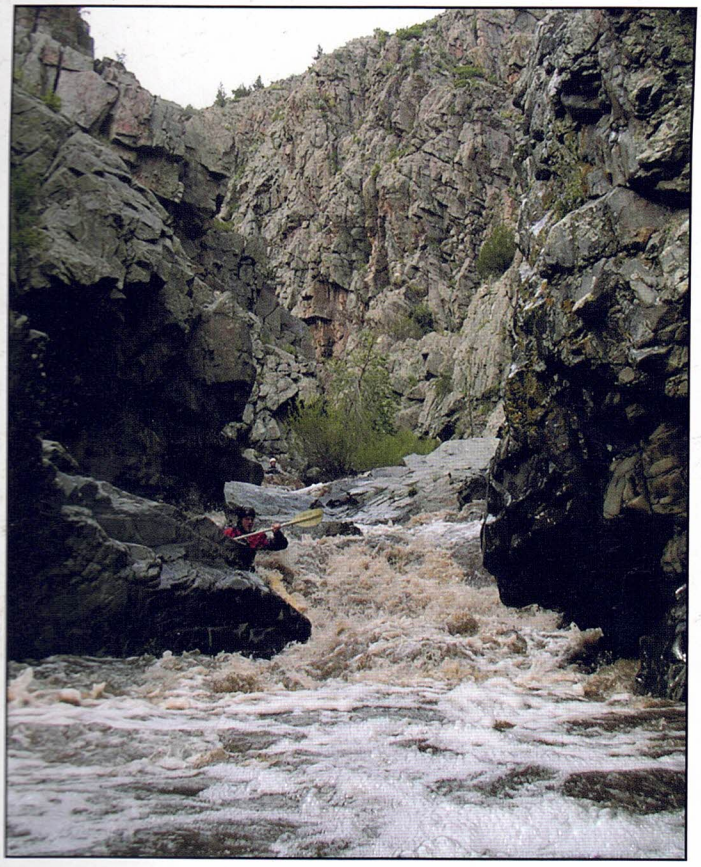
THE PREMIERE AFTERWORK RUN, OFFERING RUNNABLE FLOWS IN THE SHOULDER SEASONS, EASY ACCESS, AND SOME GOOD PLAY BETWEEN THE GNAR.



JED POLICKY PETE STROMBERG SUPER COLLIDER, THE UPPER

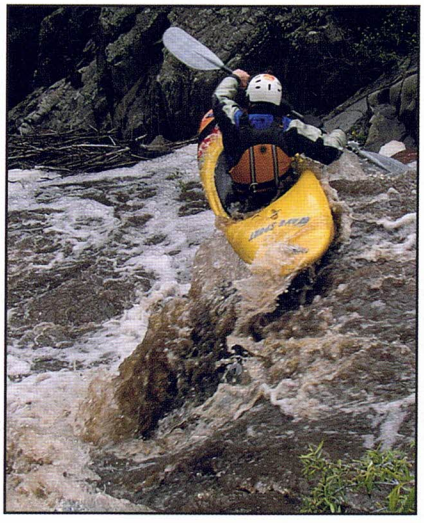
Buckhorn Creek

Buckhorn Creek flows through an obscure and beautiful granite canyon near Masonville. It only runs with heavy rain uncharacteristic to the region and the access is tenuous at best. If Fort Collins is under a flood warning, rally the crew for an illegal descent of Count Chocula, Captain Crunch and the Frosted Flake, but make sure to check with locals first for the latest most stealth put-in and take-out options.



Directions: Find Buckhorn Creek west of Masonville. Find a guide. Or, take your chances with the shotguns and landowners, being prepared to be treated like a schoolboy on a first date with a cowboy's pigtailed daughter.

CFS	100<min
Class	V-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	150 fpm
Length	2 miles
Season	lots of rain
Gauge	Buck @ Masonville
Riv Access	guide mandatory



ES Leif embertson ♦Cap'n Crunch, Buckhorn Creek

Little South Fork Poudre

Dropping out of the Mummy Range and meandering through Pingree Park, the Little South Fork of the Poudre is a picturesque trout stream with little in the way of interesting boating. In its final stretch before merging with the main fork, the Little South traverses a small wilderness area bearing the Cache la Poudre name. This is a scenic run that does not contain classic whitewater and rarely runs at optimal levels. Unless it has been cleaned recently, at any regular flow expect to find multiple portages, a constricted creek bed that somehow still manages to feel extremely shallow, and a few class IV rapids. At high water this run is worth doing. Flood levels will produce multiple large holes to punch and overall much more interesting boating.

Gauge: The Little South foot gauge is located at the confluence with the main Poudre, a few hundrd yards above Century Park Campground. The creek comes in on river right. You must look across the river and sometimes wade into the current to get a good view.

Directions: The take-out is Century Park about ¼ mile below the confluence of the south and main Poudre on Hwy 14. Drive west on Hwy 14 and turn left on Pingree Park Road. Go eight miles south to the put-in bridge over the South Fork. Be careful of barbwire in the first mile.

CFS	1.0'<min (visual)
Class	IV+
Quality	★★
Gradient	140 fpm
Length	12.5 miles
Season	early peak
Gauge	visual foot gauge
Put-in	Fish Crk Trailhead
Take-out	Century Park CG

ES Pete Stromberg ♦Frosted Flake, Buckhorn

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Leland Davis photo
Andria Baldovin running
No Way Out,
Vallecito Creek, CO

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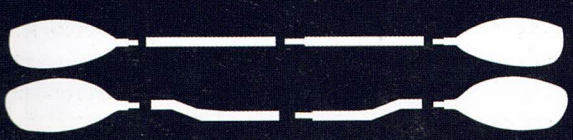
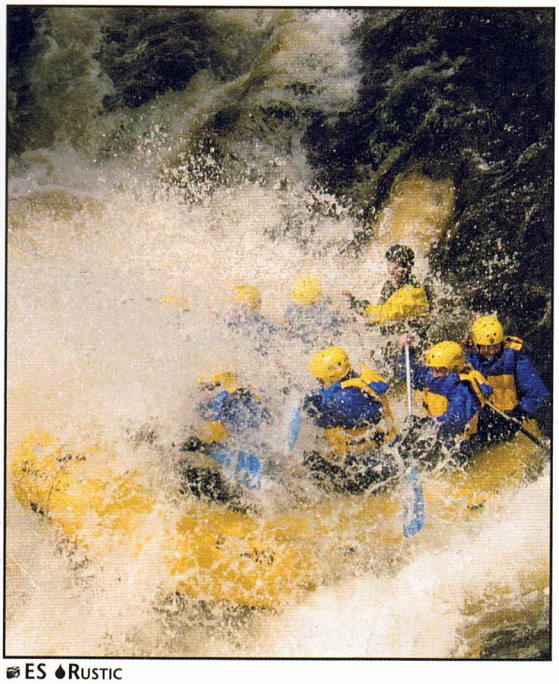


LENDAL
www.lendal.com

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Gauge Height	2.0′	2.5′	3.0′	4.0′
Approx. CFS	330	470	650	1300
Character	drag a raft	drag less	float	play
Class	III- (III+)	III (III+)	III (IV- x2)	III (IV x2)
Quality	★	★	★★★	★★★★
Gradient	60 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	fair			
Length	20 miles upper, 9 miles lower, highly variable throughout			
Season	peak			
Gauge	Pineview Rock or Cache La Poudre at Canyon Mouth near Ft. Collins			
Put-in	Sleeping Elephant Campground			
Take-out	Narrows Picnic Area			

The Rustic section is the mid-Poudre zone sandwiched between the steep upper reaches of the drainage and the perfect Poudre class curve of the lower canyon. Although sometimes overlooked, Rustic is a nice intermediary respite, maintaining a more remote and wild feel because of substantially less vehicle and boater traffic. The Upper Rustic features a short stretch of rambunctious class IV followed by scenic and wide meandering. The Lower Rustic is the more commonly run of the two and is largely class III with three tougher drops that could trip up the unsuspecting river runner. Since both runs have wider river beds than the rest of the drainage they are best run with higher flows.



ES ♦ Rustic

Upper Rustic

Below Spencer Heights there is an entertaining piece of intermediate whitewater which mellows after the Sleeping Elephant. Somewhere downstream in this area is also a section that I have heard referred to as the Miracle Mile. From my recollections it is actually a miracle ¼ mile of class IV whitewater in what is otherwise an area predominantly surrounded by class II. The whitewater of the miracle ¼ mile starts near mile-marker 86. Below here the river meanders through rustic scenery and pleasurable class II.

Lower Rustic

This run begins on the upstream end of Indian Meadows and ends above the Narrows. Grandpa's Gorge (III+) begins when the Poudre crosses to the South side of Hwy 14. Later in the run floaters encounter Decapitation Bridge which features an abrupt class IV drop under an old bridge. The bottom of the last significant rapid goes through Hole 99 for the brave and skirts left for the prudent. The finale to the run comes when the river gorges slightly and where newbies are tricked into thinking that they've inadvertently passed the take-out and are headed for the class V+ Upper Narrows.

Directions

The put-in for the upper run is highly variable. The Sleeping Elephant Campground marks a fairly easy access point. The regular take-out for the upper run, and the put-in for the lower run, is at Indian Meadows Picnic Area near mile-marker 93. Be careful of the low highway bridge upstream of Indian Meadows— it is probably a good idea to scout to check if the clearance is sufficient. The take-out for the lower run is at the Narrows Picnic area or Campground around mile-marker 102.

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PETE'S FIVE LESSONS OF CREEKBOATING

Learned the Hard Way So You Don't Have To

-Pete Stromberg

Lesson 1

Bluegrass Creek, WY

When you want to end a move on the left, you should start from the right and move across the river.

A beat down of epic proportions followed by a horrendous ¼-mile swim of 2.5' deep, 300 fpm terrain was handed out to me because I failed to heed the right to left beta when it was being doled out. After the first major falls, a fast conveyor belt straight-away leads into a non-threatening looking ledge in an unatural desert mini-gorge. The move was to launch the ledge on the far left. The set up was relatively mellow and beginning on the right and crossing over to the left would have been easy. I chose to begin my approach on the left. This did not work. I was unceremoniously kicked to the center meat of the ledge hole, flipped and stuffed into a small cave behind the curtain. Unable to roll from this awkward and unpleasant position I pulled and proceeded to take one of, if not the most painful swim of my career. My toes, shins and knees were battered. My nuts (medical term) were momentarily pinned between my body and a rock. Enough said. When you want to end on one side of the river, cross over from the opposite side.

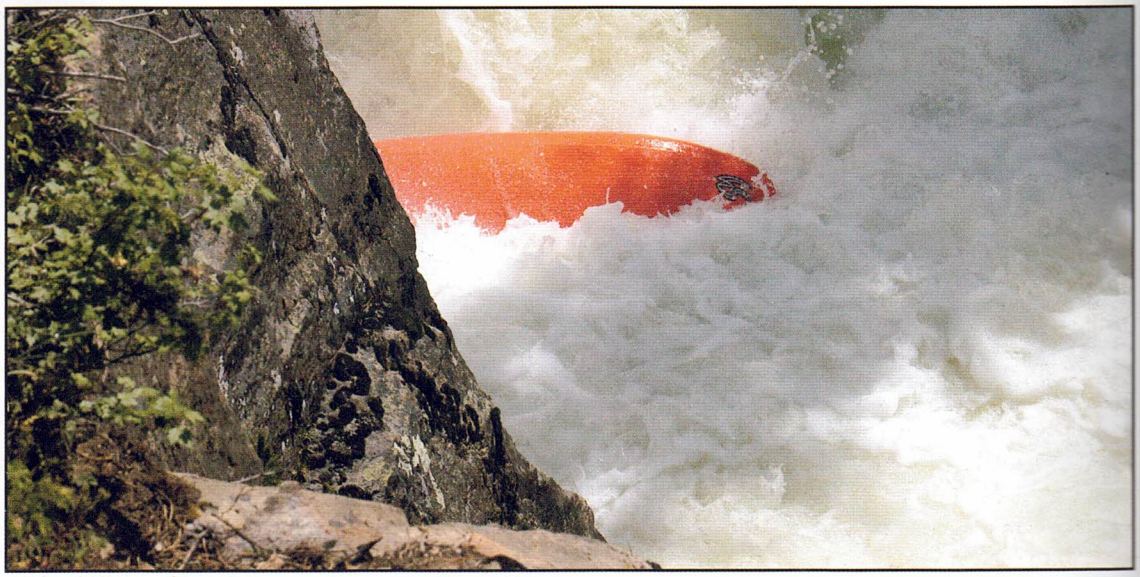
Lesson 2

Big South, CO

If in doubt, scout. Even if you think you're good.

Placed in an eddy above a little rapid called Tubular Balls in the wilderness of the Big South at high flow, I found myself in an interesting argument with a trusted kayaker and author of this book. He was mentioning that we should probably scout this next rapid, however we were both tired. Part B of lesson two; if you're ever arguing about scouting, or too tired to scout, you should probably just scout. During our very intelligent conversation, all hell was breaking loose with the rest of our group, none of whom scouted the rapid and was ahead of us. A friend was already experiencing separation anxiety from his trusted vessel, yet we were completely unaware.

I believe "Let's just go" is what came out of my mouth as I peeled out of the eddy above the blind corner. I was a little further left than I had imagined coming down the entrance drop and I bumped into a carved out rock wall which happened to be very undercut. I did some underwater wedging and decided to exit my craft after it came to a stop while I was still completely submerged. When I came up gasping like a wounded carp, I realized



RANDY RAMIREZ PETE STROMBERG TROUBLE IN DOUBLE TROUBLE

from the screams of terror coming from the banks that there was something even more terrible than an undercut immediately downstream—a strainer. With the might of an Olympic swimmer I cut into the eddy like a Pabst cuts a man's thirst, very fast indeed. I made it to shore and learned a very valuable lesson. 5 kayakers + 0 scouts= 2 swims. You do the math.

Lesson 3
Treasure Canyon, CO

Put-on as early as possible, even if it means possibly hanging out at the take-out for a little bit. Never underestimate the time it takes to complete a new run sans guide.

"We should put-on as late as possible," were the words that escaped my lips as we lounged in the alpine sun near the apex of the Alamosa River drainage. Our crooked logic led us to believe that we would be more likely to find a shuttle the later we arrived at the deserted take-out campground. We figured that because it was Friday, campers would be arriving in the late afternoon after getting off work (surely we could coax someone into giving us a ride). Finishing this easy wilderness run, which none of our party (book authors or myself) had completed previously, at high water in a mere few hours should be a piece of cake. We were wrong. We hiked out after two swims to an empty campground, hiked our own shuttle in the dark and generally got our asses kicked. We ended up trying to leave via a snowed-in pass, spending the night at the put-in, and then hiking back into the first gorge at sunrise where I had left Evan's camera after one of our group's two swims (mine). Put-on early, if not for any other reason but to respect the river.

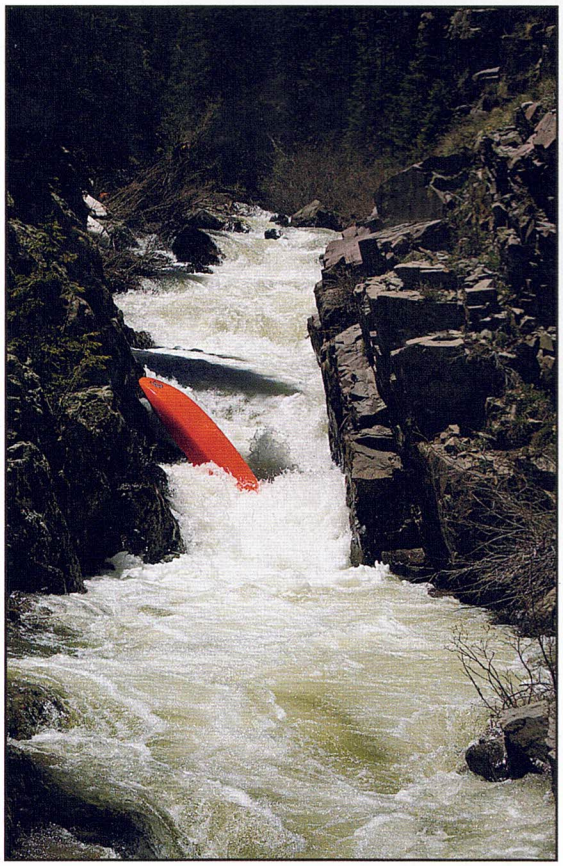
Lesson 4
Poudre Narrows, CO

The River Gods are ALWAYS LISTENING.

Re-pent. Webster defines this word as follows: verb, to feel or express sincere regret or remorse about one's wrongdoing or sin.

Now I am not considered a 'religious' man by any means. However, I do consider the river my church and I was taught a lesson in being humble. . .which is a hard lesson for me, I admit.

So there I was, in the back yard of Fort Collins, the Narrows of the Wild and Scenic Cache La Poudre River (that's French if you didn't know). Lower Narrows: First lap—great. Probably one of the top ten best runs of all time at this flow. I dunno, I have to ask some of the elders. Second lap—even better. I boofed the second hole so huge that with the compression of my boat on the water I knocked several fish out of the river onto the banks. I wouldn't have



believed it myself unless I was there. Walking back up I returned the little fishes to the river—boof and release. Third lap—as I'm doing my warm up rituals at the put-in, I shit you not, I looked over at Leif and smugly said, "If you can stay close I'll show you the lines." Right then the river Gods sent a bolt of lightening down on the river. I didn't see it of course because I was already anticipating the biggest boof of my career. I came around the airplane move, looked back to see if Leif had seen me absolutely clean the line, and right then I meandered into the next hole, subbed out and missed my brace coming out of the hole to the left. I tried a roll, missed and then was sucked into the quasi-undercut and pinned upside down. Knowing I couldn't roll up and the inevitable swim was coming, a quote popped into my mind—

"If you can stay close, I'll show you the lines."

OUCH on many levels. The swim was fine. A little bruised. Lost my paddle so if you find a red and black Power House Werner in the river, it's worth some beer. The ego. . . it was hurt. . .it hurts. And my first swim in that section of my back yard. The River Gods are ALWAYS LISTENING. Release the demons.

ES Pete Stromberg STILL IN THE BOAT, Treasure Canyon

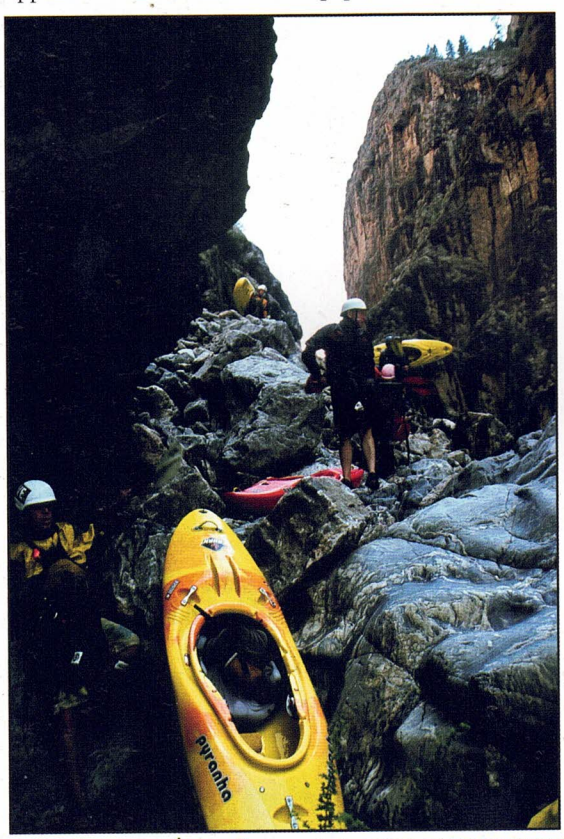
Lesson 5

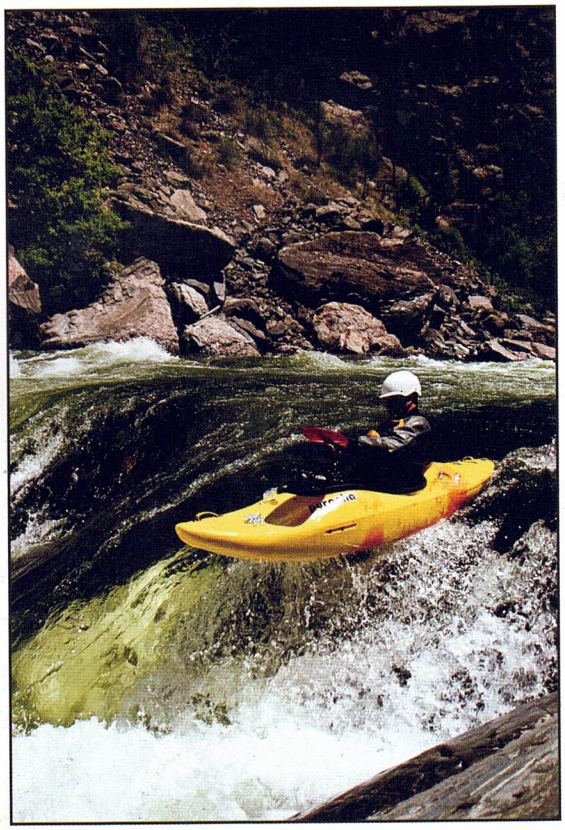
Black Canyon, CO

I came around the corner of another class III++ (the ++ rating is because if you are off your line two feet you will go into a sieve or undercut). Anyway, I came around the corner on a left-to-right move and got caught in a little swirly, which spun me around upstream of an undercut sieve. It hadn't looked that serious from shore, and I still wasn't too concerned. I caught a weird surge when I was reaching for the good water and the swirly hick-upped me upside down and towards the sieve. I tried to roll and hit the rock. My paddle was ripped out of my one hand as I was getting hammered against the rock with some very strong current. I thought if I pulled I might be able to get around the corner of the rock. Nope. I was sucked immediately into the first level of the sieve. I had a foot hold and was reaching to go back the way I came in to get some air, unsuccessfully. Just when I realized I had to go deeper, my paddle came through and took my legs out and now I was flushing deeper into the cave. When I finally stopped the room was completely dark, and the current was pinning me sideways in the darkest part of the sieve. Just then a vivid image of my lady came to mind. I was to be married in two weeks, and an image appeared of the Gunnison newspaper with the headline KAYAKER DIES IN THE BLACK CANYON.

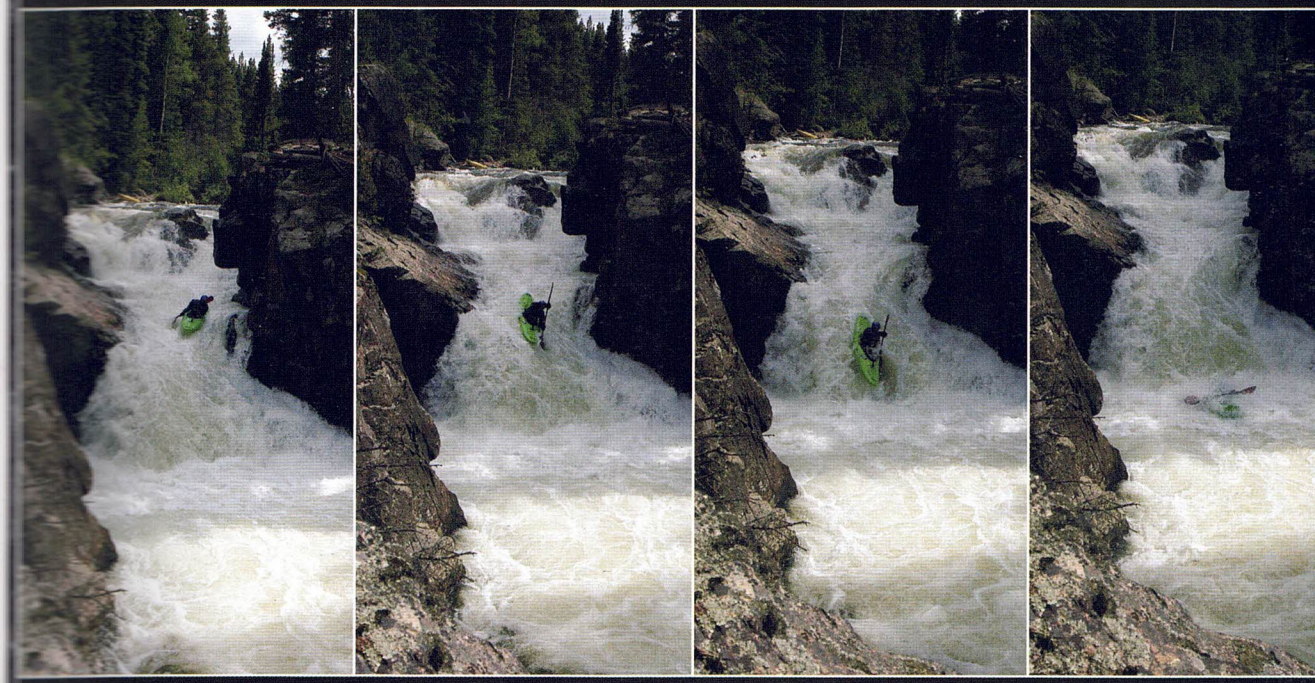
By now 25 to 30 seconds have gone by. When water started creeping into my mouth, I started to take note of the stages of drowning—very calm. Just when I realized it was okay to die, I looked over and saw a little green light the size of a basketball, in an otherwise very dark room to my right. I lunged for the light. I didn't fit. Fuck. I tried again and I saw that I was short of reaching air with my fingertips by about 3 inches. Water was definitely coming in my mouth and my chest was burning. I was pushing through the hole so hard that I *ran* my booties against the rocks and started ripping my toe nails off, clawing my way to the good stuff—oxygen. After my fourth and final attempt my head went through the hole into the light. I popped out of the back of the sieve like a dancer out of a birthday cake—very excited and blushing. Never give up.

The whole ordeal, as far as the group could tell, was probably 45 seconds to a minute. I want people to realize that there is always a chance that a little green-light exists at the end of the tunnel. NEVER GIVE UP! Even when things look close to being over, keep looking and keep trying and you might come out okay. I can think of two different moments when I thought I was stuck, and like clockwork something changed and I was able to keep moving.





LEIF EMBERTSON PETE STROMBERG PUSHING ON THROUGH THE BLACK CANYON



There is only one federally designated Wild and Scenic River in Colorado. We need more.

Fight.

PAUL RONTO

Spencer Heights

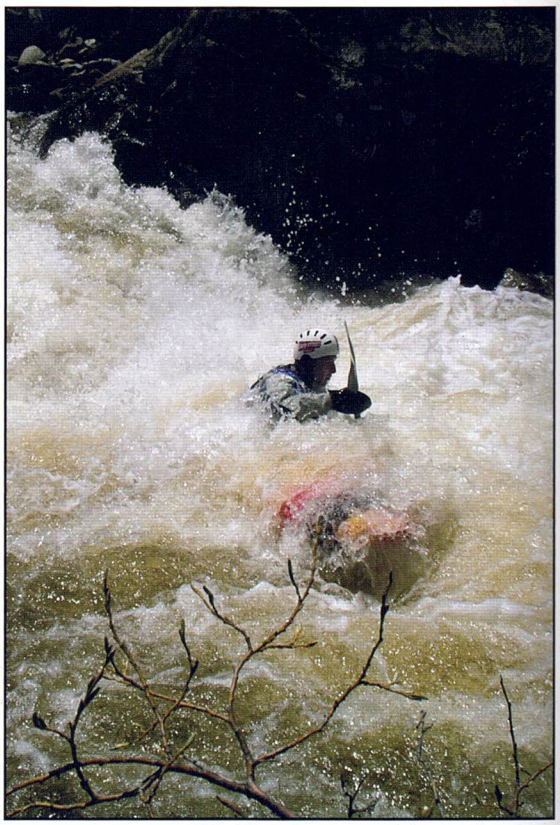
Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Pineview Ht.	2.0′	2.5′	3.0′	4.0′
Visual CFS	260	320	450	600
Sportsman's	2.2′	2.5′	2.8′	3.2′
Character	bone zone	technical	filled in	juicin′
Class	IV+ (NR)	V- (NR)	V (NR)	V (NR)
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	155 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good			
Length	2.5			
Season	May to July			
Gauge	Sportsman's is ideal visual, minus inflow from Laramie Tunnel			
Put-in	Big South Campground			
Take-out	Tunnel Picnic Area			

High in the Poudre drainage, surrounding one of the only real deal class NR rapids in Colorado, Poudre Falls, 2.5 exciting miles of class IV/V rapids exist. Below the confluence of the Big South and Joe Wright Creek, you can easily boat-scout some nice technical rapids which eventually culminate in Rocket Launcher, a powerful hole with a Jekyl and Hyde type personality. Nine times out of ten you can run the meat of this hole, watch your buddy run it upside down and backwards and be no worse for wear, but on that tenth time this hole will thrash you. When it does hopefully you've got enough sense to abandon the gear and get to shore. Pray that a friend nabs your boat. Merely a few hundred yards downstream awaits the crucial eddy above the mighty three tiered falls that bears this rivers name.

Keep your footing as you ride the loose gravel down the steep embankment to the churning pool below the falls. This short chasm has a few committing moves and is an optional put-in for those who do not wish to test the portage eddy. Seal slide directly into the powerful but manageable whitewater and be prepared for some quick strokes once the walls open up and you enter Cyclotron rapid. This technical drop is somewhat long and requires precise moves at higher flows. Cross under the highway and enter into the Boneyard. Below Boneyard there is another short gorge with entertaining and pushy whitewater. The whitewater eases but continues to hold your attention all the way to the take-out at the Tunnel Picnic Area. Here a beautiful hole can be found at levels around 3′ on the Sportsman's gauge and around 4′ on the Pineview gauge, so bring your playboat and switch 'em out for some post creeking rodeo action.

Directions

The take-out is at the Tunnel Picnic area, a couple of hundred yards upstream of the in-flow from the Laramie Tunnel. The put-in is either two miles up Hwy 14 at the Big South Trailhead or in the eddy just below Poudre Falls.



ES Pete Stromberg Rocket Launcher

Pushy and cold action in the upper reaches of the Poudre Drainage along Hwy 14. A nice one to combine with Joe Wright Creek.

Joe Wright

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Visual CFS	120	150	225	300
Character	bony	technical	fast corners	hang on
Class	V-	V- (V, V)	V	V
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	190 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside, but hidden			
Hitchability	good			
Length	3 miles			
Season	May, June			
Gauge	visual, high water			
Put-in	1/4 mile upstream of CR103 bridge			
Take-out	Aspen Glen Picnic Area			

Nestled high in the Poudre drainage, where the water is always frigid, there is a short, low volume creek named Joe Wright. This run is ultra-continuous, yet really only has two distinct challenging rapids. There are few eddies, so when you see one, take it and have a breather. The air up here is crisp and fresh, and although the run is roadside, it has a nice wilderness feel. The two rapids of note are both easily scouted from the road. On the way to the put-in, pull over just before the Larimer County Rd 103 Bridge, that leads into the Rawahs, to scout Carnito Canyon. Continue past the bridge a ¼-mile and pull over to scout Cornholio. Put-in wherever comfortable above Cornholio.

Tim Hawkins Randy Ramirez Carnito Canyon

Once on the river paddlers need to be dialed in fairly quickly. How quickly depends on how high above Cornholio you put on. The river makes a sweeping right turn as it drops into Cornholio. Don't get nervous and drop the soap. Things happen very quickly as you drop down a short slide and rocket-launch off an eight' shelf. I would recommend medium or high flows when running this because of a shallow and skinny LZ.

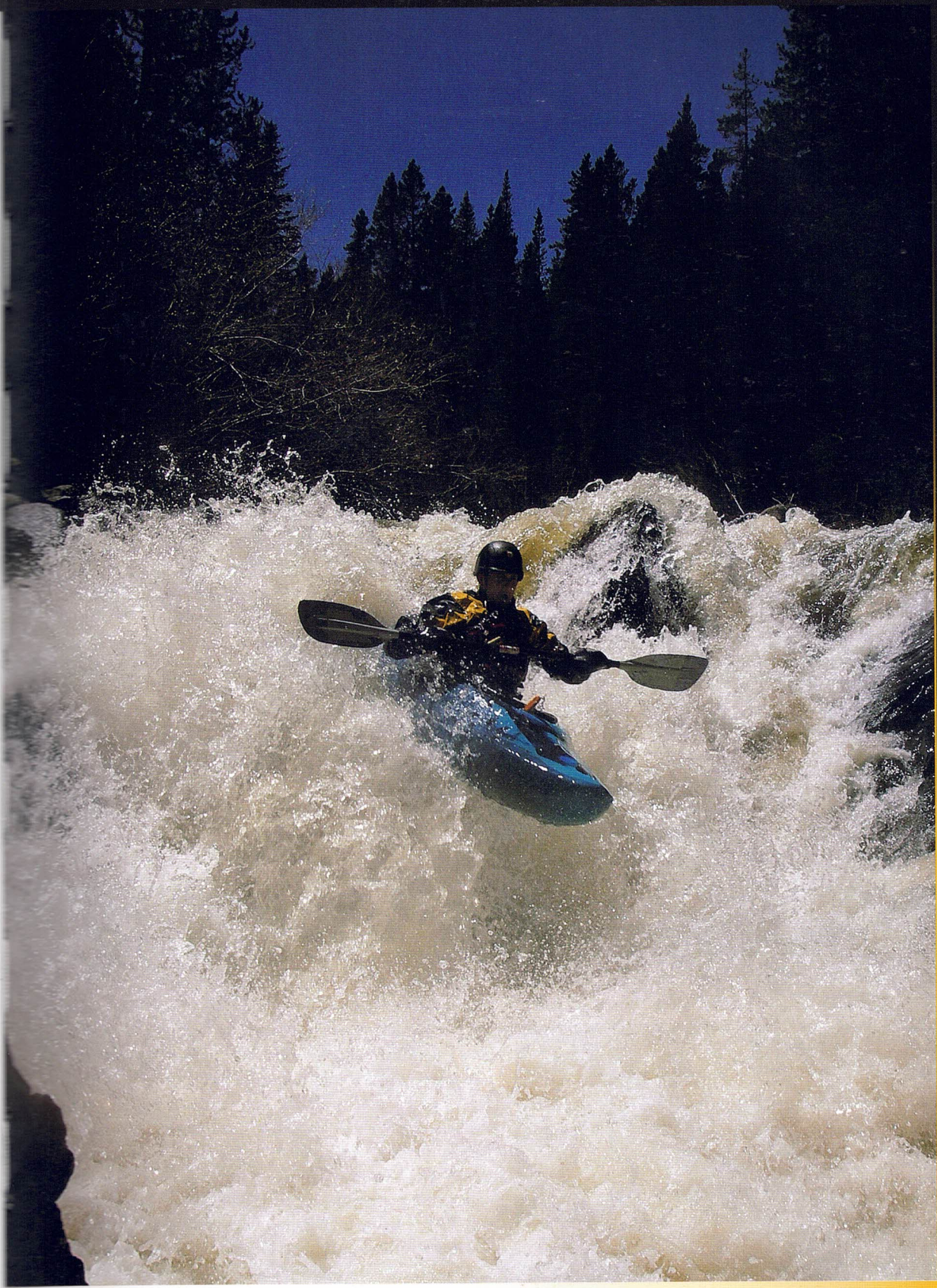
After a short stretch of technical, fast boating and one solid class IV drop under the 103 Bridge. Just below is the lead-in to the hopefully pre-scouted route through Carnito Canyon. Get as much of the fan-rock boof as you want and enjoy this classic mini-canyon. From here, to the confluence with the Big South, the boating is all shallow, fast, and technical creeking. During the course of the run a few islands are encountered. When in doubt, go right. Use the force, or the wood-spotting skills, since an ugly placement of a log could definitely sour the mood.

Combining this with a run down Spencer Heights will make a day of it. If you time it right, you can claim the High Poudre Triple Crown—completion of a Joe Wright/Spencer run, combined with a run of part or all of the Big South, depending on if the gate is open. Another good option, especially if you're traveling from a distance, is to run the Big South one day, and then to hit a Joe Wright/Spencer the next to round out a weekend trip.

Directions

The take-out for this run is either at the Aspen Glen Picnic Area, approximately 1.5 miles above the Big South take-out or at any number of pull-outs above Poudre Falls on Hwy 14. The put-in is at the 103 Rd bridge or, if running Cornholio, at a pullout approximately ¼-mile west of 103 Rd.

A small, cold, and continuous creek run in the highest reaches of the Poudre drainage that can easily be combined with many of the other paddling options in the area.



Poudre • Joe Wright

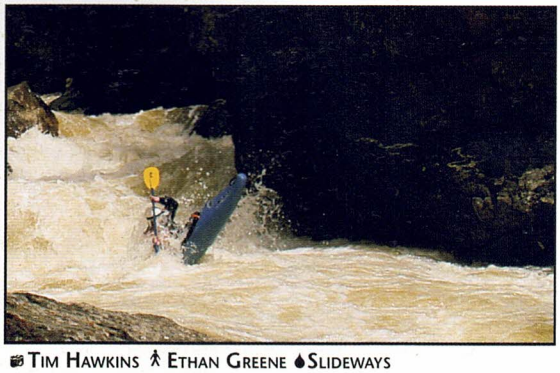
Big South

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Visual CFS	160	200	300	400
Character	still worth it	everything goes	big ones stompy	scared, portaging
Class	V (V+ x3)	V (V+ x3)	V+	V+ (NR)
Quality	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	155 fpm, 230 fpm crux			
Remoteness	wilderness with good trail access (use Peterson Lake for shorter runs or escape)			
Hitchability	poor, except for other paddling groups			
Length	12 miles			
Season	June, July (gate restiricted)			
Gauge	Long Draw outflow + Main Fork Estimate, or visual @ take-out			
Put-in	Long Draw Res outflow			
Take-out	Big South Trailhead			

Wild [adj.] in a natural state; not tamed or domesticated; brought forth by unassisted nature; savage. Scenic [adj.] used of locations having beautiful natural scenery.

Out of the expansive Northern wild lands of Rocky Mountain National Park flows Colorado's highest quality expert run of any substantial length, the Big South Fork of the Cache la Poudre. Designated in 1986 as Colorado's only Wild and Scenic river corridor, the Cache la Poudre river begins its descent to the plains as a small and relatively flat creek draining Poudre Lake (pond) near the summit of Trailridge Road. As this fledgling river reaches the park's northern border and forms the boundary between the national park and the Commanche Peak Wilderness it begins to live up to its title, the BIG South.

Big means the best steep creeking that the Poudre has to offer and does not refer to the cfs amount in this case—this is a low volume run. The creek has two distinct characters with a mellow float between to regroup and/or stroke nerves. The top half of the run is characterized by classic and well-defined pool drop, the likes of which is not typically found in Colorado. Deep pools preceded by beautiful granite formations provide fantastic rapids which are easily scouted/portaged at or near river level. The second half of the run is much more continuous in nature but no less wild nor scenic. With a guide and moderate water levels strong boaters can be routed through all but one of the drops in this lower half—the recommended technique.



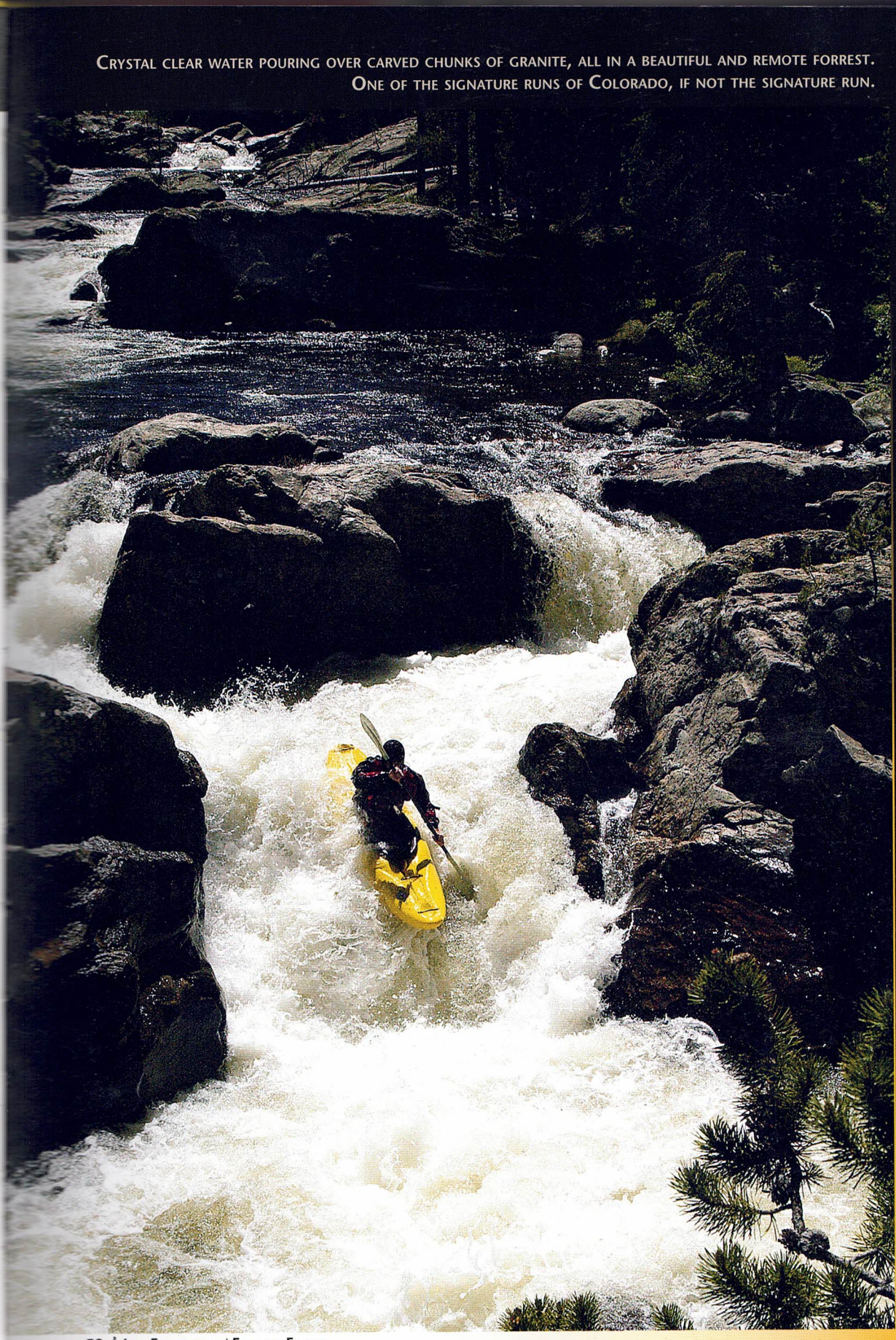
Tim Hawkins Ethan Greene Slideways

The most common put-in begins with two fun miles of warm-up micro creeking on a small tributary, La Poudre Pass Creek, better known as Weird Creek. Rock Lobster is the rapid of note here and comes quickly about 1.5-miles into Weird Creek. A low bridge, currently in bad repair, may need to be portaged at high flows. This marks the confluence with the Big South proper. After a short mile of floating past a multitude of world class fishing holes the pool drop begins with Starter Fluid, a fairly straight forward boof with some great eddy-hopping to get in the groove. After another short calm spell, three significant drops appear—Bouncing Betty into Taco Bob, Bar Room Brawl, and a technical but classy drop titled Fantasy Flight.

Next is Cool World. The lead-in can be deceptive, so eddy-hop on the left shore to ensure an early scout. This is a classic thin-line Poudre drop which lands you in a fun mini-gorge—cool. Bonk is next followed by what I believe to be the most consequential drop of the run, Meltdown. A technical entrance, including a hidden piton rock, is followed by a strong move to the right to avoid an ugly sieve center left. A rocky run-out leads to the three-mile class II sprint through the Peterson Lake area.

Peterson Lake provides a good alternate put-in for lower flows or bailout spot for the unintentional C-1'ers and the likes. Boulder gardens of varying difficulty culminate with Prime Time Gorge. Beyond, a big horizon line signals Double Trouble and a chance to perfect the late boof stroke or, for your partners to perfect their rope toss. Eddy right and don't forget to look for, but not crush the small patch of extremely rare Fairy Slipper Orchids which reside there. Slideways carries the heaviest gradient in the remainder of

Crystal clear water pouring over carved chunks of granite, all in a beautiful and remote forrest. One of the signature runs of Colorado, if not the signature run.



Poudre • Big South

ES Leif Embertson Fantasy Flight

the run, but the boulder rapids continue until the bitter end—Curtain Call, a dangerous sieve at the exit to the final gorge before Highway 14. Unless you have a guide or are still in the mood to scout extensively, exit the river at an impassable log jam around a 1/2-mile from the trailhead. The Rush is a section of committing rapids directly above the sieve and below the logjam that cuts out the final hike. An amazing end to a stellar run, but a section that should not be taken lightly.

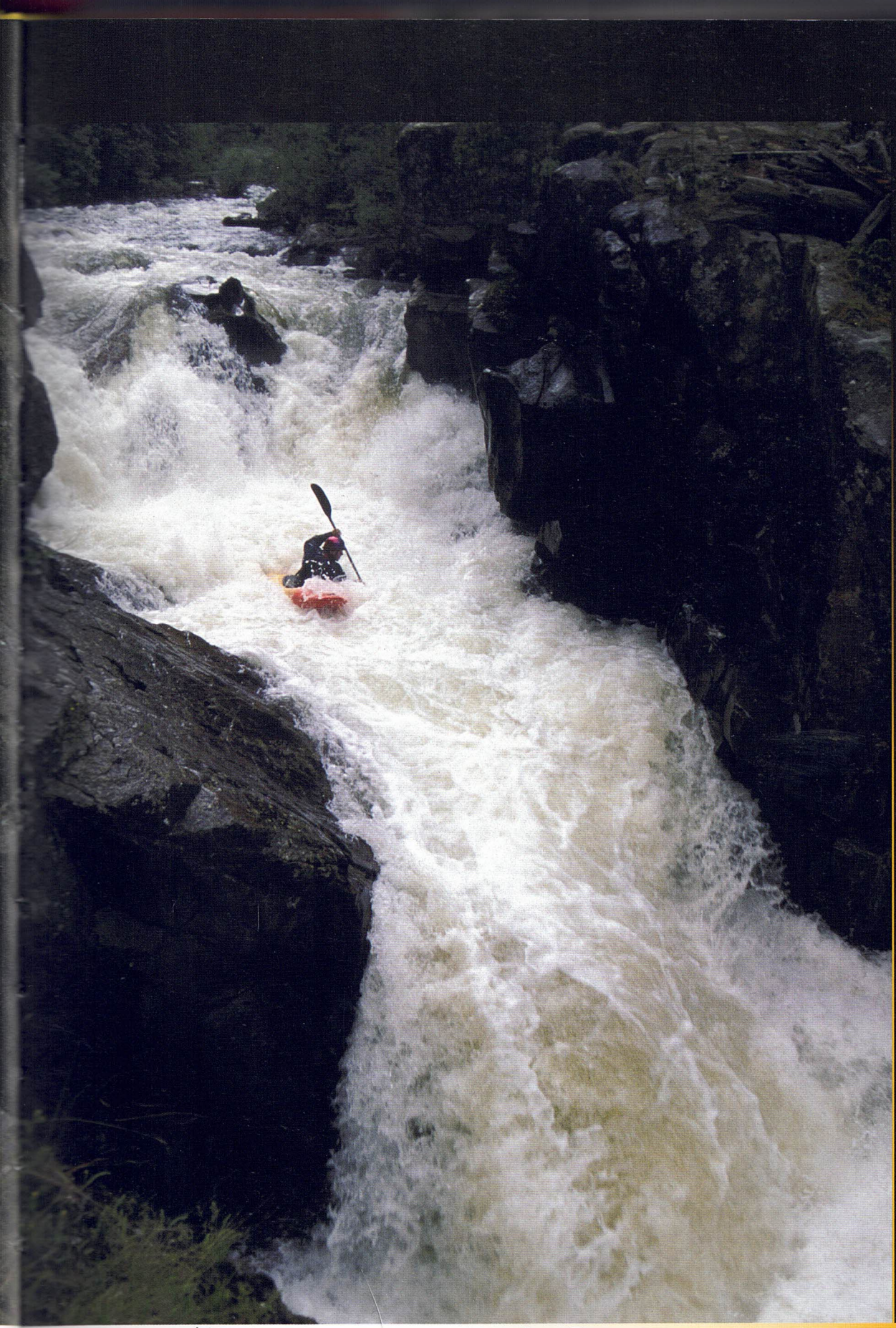
Access Issues: Timing access to the Big South can be tricky. Long Draw, the forest service road to the put-in is guarded by the gate. The gate is usually locked well into the season of runnable flows to keep aggressive four wheelers from tearing up the delicate wetlands in the region, and also to alleviate pressure from the continuously understaffed Canyon Lakes Ranger District. The unintended result is the denial of access by the most sensitive of all forest users—creek boaters, until mid-June or early July. Beg, borrow or steal a forest service key and early access, though illegal, is yours (don't forget to lock the gate behind you). When the gate officially opens expect a frenzied influx of river vagabonds from distances far and wide.

From the Source: One legal way to ensure an early access run of the Big South is to drop in from Trail Ridge Road, near the source in Rocky Mountain National Park. To run the Poudre from the source, hike down from Trail Ridge Road to the confluence of the Upper Upper Cache la Poudre (draining from Poudre Lake) and Chapin Creek (draining Chapin Pass near Fall River Rd). From this confluence you should be able to paddle down through one clogged gorge and mostly scenic class II to the confluence with Weird Creek and to the Big South proper. This trip can be done in one long day but is much more pleasurable as an overnighter.

Gauge Info: Judging water levels for this run has evolved into a science of its own. The visual gauge, which has existed in various forms and placements in the past has finally become one with the river. The gauge was flushed downstream in the summer of 2006 and, as of this writing, has yet to be replaced. One estimation of the Big South's level involves the outflow from Long Draw Reservoir and the flow entering from the park down the main stem. Another involves the height on the Sportsman's Gauge minus the inflow from the Laramie Tunnel and Joe Wright. The best way to judge the flow is to find a seasoned Poudre local who has properly calibrated their personal gauge rock to reflect at least the rudimentary flow levels of low, medium and high. Trade your shuttle for their guide service and you may have a deal, especially with added incentives such as a beautiful shuttle bunny and/or cold barley sodas.

Directions

The take-out is at the Big South Trailhead a mile or so upstream of Poudre Falls. To get to the put-in continue west on Hwy 14 and turn south onto Long Draw Road (FR 156). Follow Long Draw Road about eight miles, nearly to Long Draw Reservoir, where there is a latrine and parking area on the left. The put-in is on La Poudre Pass Creek (Weird Creek), the out-flow of Long Draw, about a ¼-mile hike down the overgrown hill. To get to Peterson Lake take Long Draw Road from Hwy 14 2.8-miles and turn left directly after passing Trap Lake, a regular Moose spotting zone.



JARED JOHNSON BRIAN GILMORE ABOUT TO PULL OFF THE BACK BOOF, DOUBLE TROUBLE

Evan Ross Warren Starrett Say Cheese, OBJ

Upper Ruby Fork

This is a pretty sweet listing, but its still a listing since it took me at least five or six times of driving over the Upper Ruby Fork before I actually thought that it was worth my time to gear up. I'm sure others have thought the same thing, and its probably been run more than anyone will ever admit. Or by some slim chance my friend Tony and I are the only two paddlers retarded enough to actually go for it. Ironically, I would run this section long before I will ever go back to the nearby Middle Ruby Anthracite section. Expect to find super mini creeking over super steep slate with super low flow all packed into a super short ¼ mile that can be run super quick. The super motivated can pre-scout the entire run and then bomb down it as a good way to split up a drive over Kebler Pass. We put in above the bridge, and downstream of a marginally runnable falls. We took out below the bridge at the first eddy we could catch, although it looked like there was some more super fun action downstream. Extra points awarded for boofing the bloated deer.

Update: As of 2006 a huge log was sitting length wise in this narrow creek. This could pose a major dilemma for future runs. It's going to take a bit more than a basic chain saw flossing.

CFS	100<best
Class	V
Quality	★★★
Gradient	120 feet
Length	400 yards
Season	CB creeks peak
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Kebler Pass bridge

Directions: A short ways west of the top of Kebler Pass (12 Rd) there is a super noticeable concrete bridge that crosses the Ruby Fork. Park, hike, and run the super slides here.

Middle Ruby Fork

Middle Ruby is a run that derives its excitement not so much from its hard drops, but more from the surety with which you must paddle into micro eddies above certain death. This is a hardcore wilderness run with amazing scenery and plenty of bear scat. The amount of portages is great, and the rapid to portage ratio should not even be mentioned while paddling the run. If ever fully scoured of wood I might consider doing this run again. The Ruby Fork equals mank town, bone zone, definitely bring the rock boat territory, and I'm content with only one descent. Look for optimal flows and even then, come expecting more of an all day adventure than anything resembling a classic whitewater run.

There are two unrunnable cascades, the first of which can be circumvented by hiking in from a river left campground a little ways down from the bridge put-in. Portage left if you put on at the bridge or if you didn't hike far enough downstream. A mile or two below the first cascade comes the second cascade that should also be portaged left. Eventually you come to a gnarly, but runnable (V+) cascade. A cliff wall will be looming high above the river at waters edge on the left. Scout thoroughly at river level. The run-out to this cascade is the last of the steep terrain.

Paddle out on Lower Ruby and Anthracite's Dark Canyon. Hiking out on TR 836 is not recommended, but possible. Portaging the entire run and hiking in for the lower is recommended.

Directions: From Paonia drive east on Hwy 133 and turn right towards Kebler Pass on 12 Rd. Continue a few miles to the take-out at Erikson Springs CG. The put-in is at the first bridge over the creek when coming up from the Paonia side. Kebler is closed until memorial day.

Lower Ruby & Anthracite's Dark Canyon

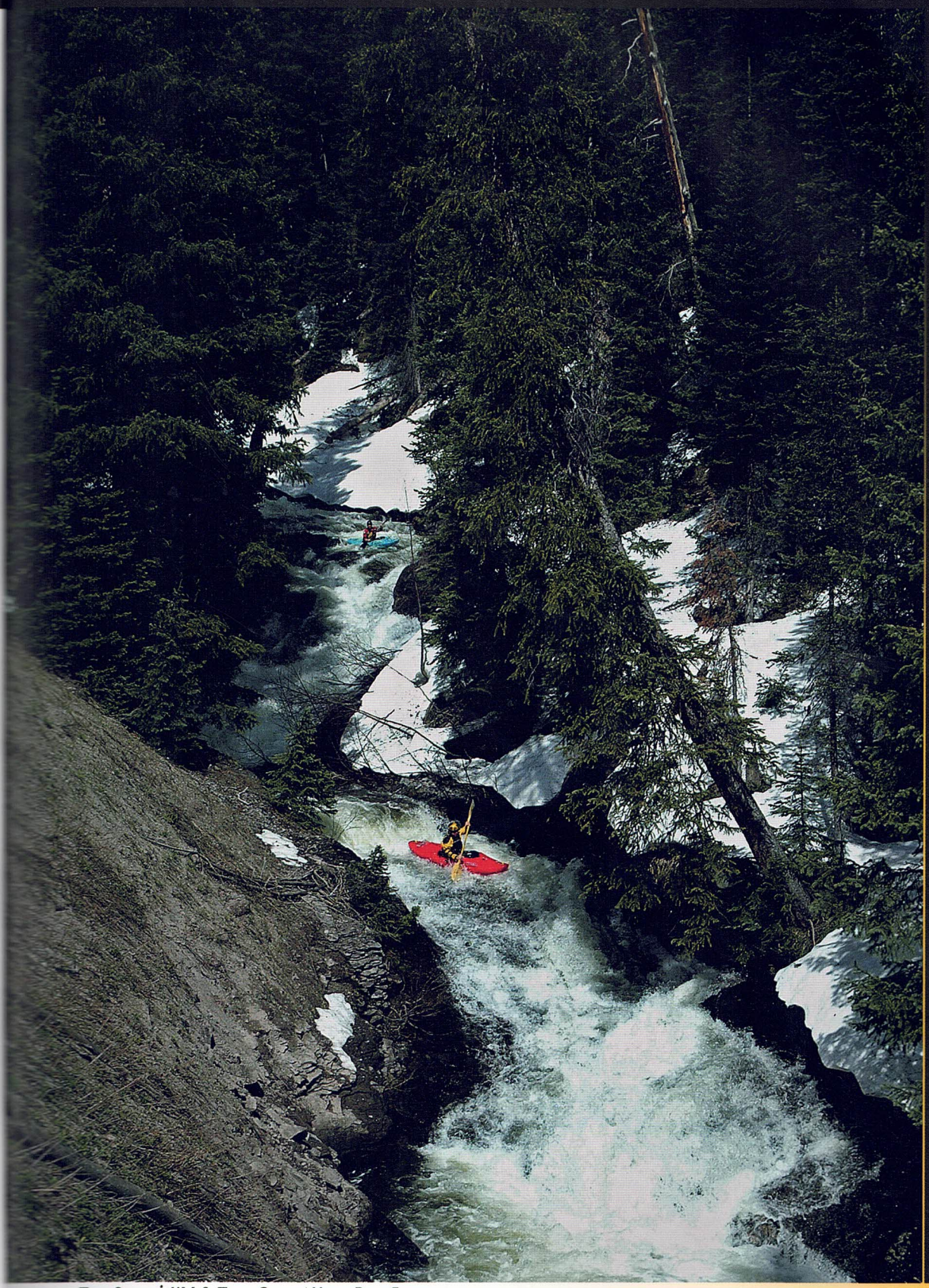
For the class IV paddler looking for adventure this is an okay five-mile section, thanks to TR 836. This two-mile long trail accesses the lowest section of Ruby Fork, and ends with Anthracite Creek's Dark Canyon, effectively avoiding all of the bullshit found on the top half of the Ruby Fork. Although still physically taxing, the hike in isn't that bad as it cruises over rolling hills before switchbacks drop down to a small camp at river level. It's much better than dealing with the Middle section.

The short-lived action starts off quickly on the bottom half of Ruby Fork. Predominately class IV with ever-present wood portages. Celebrate once reaching Anthracite Creek, as the remainder of the run has about twice the flow, half the portages, and equally stunning scenery. From the confluence down is the Dark Canyon, featuring cliff walls and towering vistas that rise hundreds of feet from river level, although paddlers are never completely walled in. Enjoy the views and the smooth paddle out to Erikson Springs.

Visual CFS	200<min<350<high
Class	IV
Quality	★★★
Gradient	135 fpm
Season	May, June

Directions: The take-out is at Erikson Springs CG off 12 Rd. Take 12 Rd towards Kebler Pass, and look for the trailhead on the outside of a sharp right turn, just after driving to the southeast side of Marcellina Mtn. TR 836 leads to the put-in.

The Ruby Fork ranks low on quality and very high on scenery. The boat crushing run in the middle is best avoided, but the rest of the river is worth a bit of exploration for the easily pleased paddler.



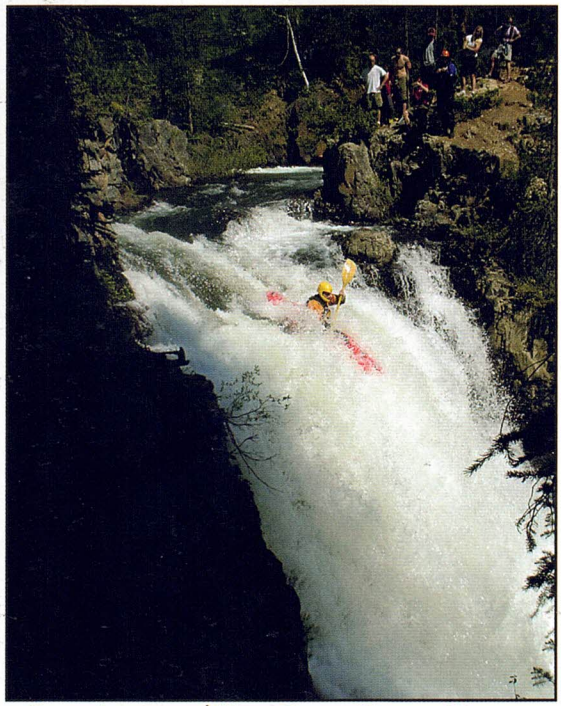
Tina Swan KM & Tony Czech Upper Ruby Fork quickie

Oh Be Joyful

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
visual CFS	150	200	300	400
Character	scrapy slides	less scrapy	holes form	hang on
Class	V-	V-	V	V+
Quality	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	400 fpm			
Remoteness	next to 4WD road, with plenty of paddlers around			
Hitchability	easy to hike shuttle and/or carpool			
Length	1 mile			
Season	May, June, early July			
Gauge	visual, and fed entirely by the days snowmelt			
Put-in	rock plateau			
Take-out	Oh Be Joyful campground			

If you haven't heard of OBJ that's weird. Despite this runs extreme degree of over-exposure, this is still one of the best short runs in the state. This is Colorado creeking. The definition. If you like slides and waterfalls, you will like OBJ. If you've never run a slide or a waterfall you will gush over OBJ.

Ankle Breaker is the upper most waterfall. Don't run this one unless you are very sure in your boof stroke and unless it is near peak run-off. The most common put-in is down the steep embankment from the parking plateau, five strokes above the first waterfall. Peel out and catch some air. Slide and boof your way to the biggest vert of the run, a corner shot to the left off this often miscalculated 23.07' falls. There is a shallow rock shelf in the right LZ that has caused multiple injuries. Lean forward to protect the spine.



Darren Livingston Marty Cronin Bajillion Words

A few more straight forward drops lead into the biggest slide, Avalanche. It looks questionable but usually boats easily. The Beaver Dam From Hell creates the pool at the bottom. Medium to high flows require a professional to exit the hole but just pick a side at the bottom and hit the eddy hard—piece of cake. Depending on water level you may have to get out here to walk around the wood or hand portage.

Following another possible portage or two, you come to the last two slides. The finale of the run is one of the more consequential drops on the run. Pre-scout to ensure a good line. Multiple runs can be done on OBJ in a day or you can go for the Crested Butte Quadruple Crown (OBJ, Daisy, Slate, and the Upper East). If it's your first time down, it's a good idea to walk the whole thing, which makes for an easy shuttle. If you want to get in shape and you think the area deserves some respect, you can easily hike your boats to the top as well. Just think of it as training for the Green Monster. Night runs secure bragging rights, and freefall hasn't truly been felt until you drop the big one on a moonless night. Don't forget about the annual race, which is a Brent Toepper brainchild and therefore guaranteed to be a good time for all.

Directions

This run is located a few short minutes above Crested Butte towards Daisy Pass on FR 374. From the Oh Be Joyful campground, just cross the Slate (without sinking your rig) and head up the moderate 4x4 road towards the OBJ Pass. About a mile up is a rock plateau. Just above the plateau is Ankle Breaker and down the bank is the lower put-in.

If you like slides and waterfalls, you will like OBJ. If you've never run a slide or a waterfall you will gush over OBJ. Classic high alpine creeking.

Jen Ross Jared Johnson The lower slides

Slate River Valley

Oh Be Joyful creek will always be the high-alpine pool-drop rock-star of the Slate River Valley, to the north of Crested Butte. But OBJ isn't the only run littered with clean waterfalls. Upstream of the OBJ base camp lies the Slate River, Daisy Creek, and the ominous North Fork Slate—providing ample drops to plunder for all levels of class V paddlers. Although rather short in length, and most only containing one or two crux drops, the action on these sections is usually too short to serve as a standalone destination. To get the most bang-for-the-buck, either spend a day on all three of these runs, or combine these options with OBJ and the Upper East. The steep drops will keep the adrenaline levels high from sunup to sundown.

Slate River

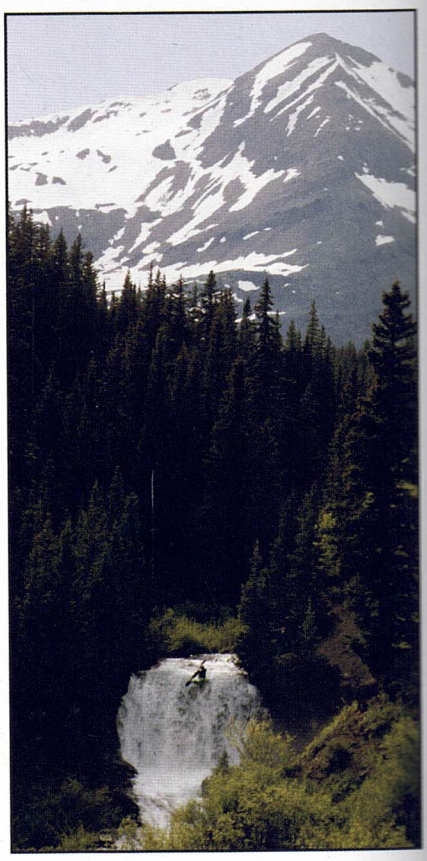
The Slate River is usually the first to be overlooked by paddling groups spending the weekend in the Crested Butte vicinity, mostly because it lacks the clean and tall drops associated with the rest of the area creeks. Although the style of drops probably won't change, the wood situation often does, since the run sits at the base of an extremely large avalanche path. In good wood years it's possible to kayak the entire run without portaging, and in bad years paddlers can expect a portage-fest.

Despite the wood issues, I thoroughly enjoy this run, because it actually allows for some real creeking, and an escape from the low-skill plop-and-drop surrounding it. A handful of small drops line the upper half of this run, and some of the symmetrical ledges can dish out unintentional back enders and hole rides to the passive.

The most defined drop of this run is Wicked Wanda (V+), which is unfortunately a wood collector. The absence of wood and medium to high flow cleans up the narrow exit considerably. Ironically the best line I've had here was due to a vertically pinned tree that provided a boofable root ball. A swim in the top of this drop could easily end in disaster—the underworld of this drop is a mix of undercut potholes and wood.

A quick set of wave trains and holes remain before the OBJ campground.

Chris Menges ⛹ Steven Melenick ♦Wicked Wanda, Slate



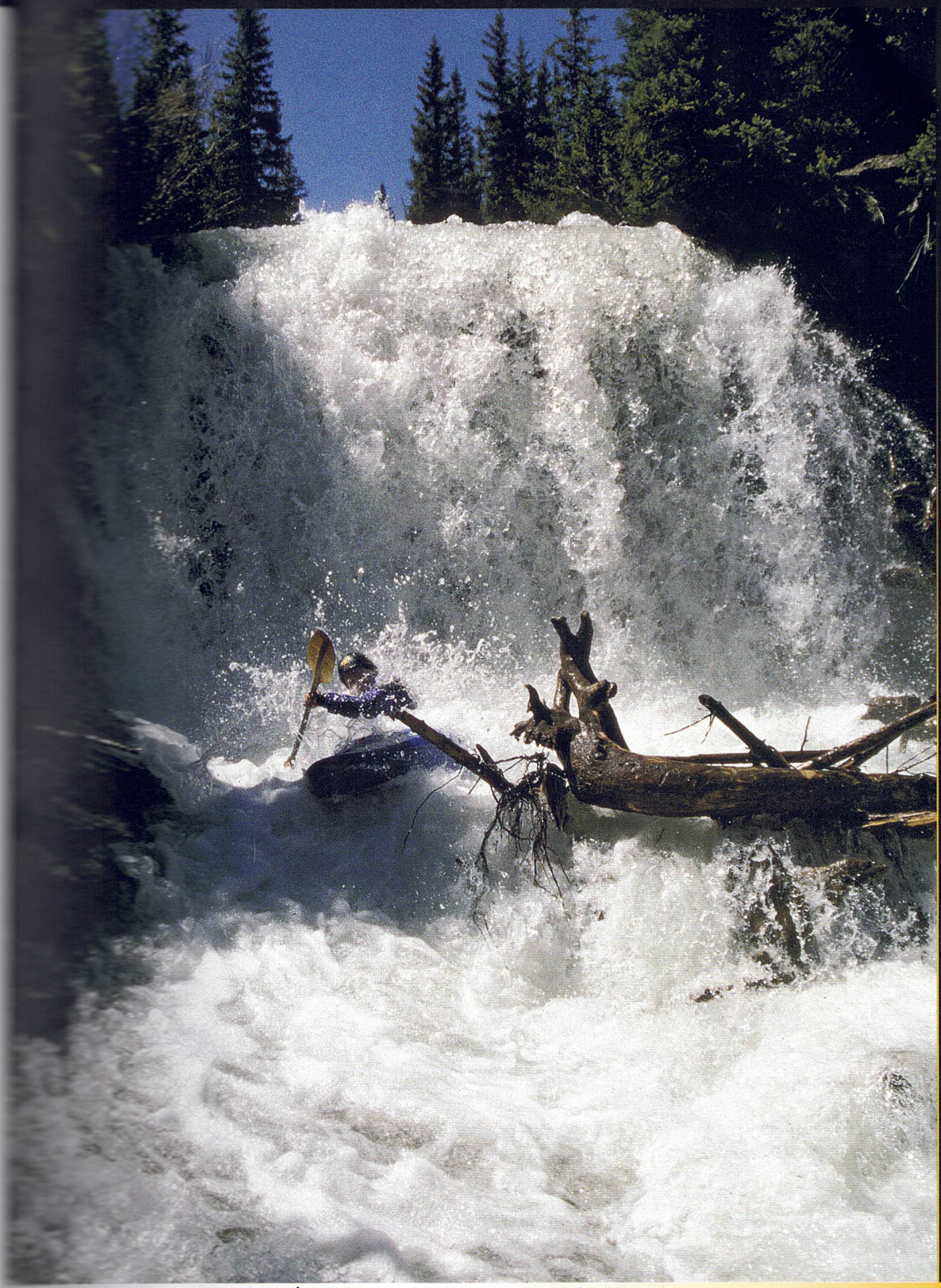
Dan Laucks ⛹ Gordon Dalton ♦Big Wood Falls, Daisy

Expect to deal with a few more wood portages before enjoying a frosty beverage, hopefully in celebration for completing the Crested Butte Quadruple Crown in record time with the posse.

Directions: Use the OBJ campground as the take-out, both for convenience and to maximize the length of the run. To reach the put-in, continue upstream on Slate River Road for approximately two miles. Where the creek bed flattens out, just below the beaver ponds, there are a few roads to unofficial campsites that serve as good put-ins.

CFS	400<min<900<best
Class	V- (V)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	125 fpm crux
Length	2 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	Slate River nr CB
Put-in	beaver ponds
Take-out	OBJ CG

UPSTREAM OF THE OBJ BASE CAMP LIES THE SLATE RIVER, DAISY CREEK, AND THE OMINOUS NORTH FORK SLATE—PROVIDING AMPLE ADRENALINE TO THE CLASS V STOKE OF THE AREA.



MAX "CHUNDERBOY" SULLIVAN 🚶 JARED JOHNSON 💧BIG WOOD FALLS, DAISY CREEK

Daisy Creek

With typical Crested Butte high-alpine creek characteristics, it's a given that Daisy is described as, "fun as hell!" Less than a mile long, it contains a bunch of easy slides above and inbetween the two signature drops, Big Wood Falls and Rip Your Head Off. The creek bed is noticeably smaller than the others in the area, and the source is nearby, so the most water meaning optimal flows will be found late in the day. The gradient is less than OBJ, greater than the Upper East, and the whitewater is consistently V- despite the name of the second drop.

Putting in high will require a portage around a mostly unrunnable 40' falls, although I've heard a near-miss story about a group of two that accidentally flushed into the drop and made it. I always choose to put in at the base of this falls, where the sliding action will start up quickly. A straightaway with a micro river right eddy upstream of a big horizon line marks Big Wood Falls (15'), named for the log pile that creates the pool at the base. The landing is shallow, and a good boof center-right is required to avoid pitoning, and to miss the wood in the run-out. It's an easy drop, but broken backs and ankles can happen.

The second and final big drop of the run, Rip Your Head Off, can be found shortly below a private bridge, where the drop borders private property. Be mindful while scouting the drop, which starts with a slide, then bends right, and pinches down uncomfortably at head height.

Due to the short nature of this run, I almost always combine it with the Slate River. The slack water between the two runs takes 15 minutes to paddle, affords good scenery, and gives adequate time for you to tell all of your friends that your boof was the biggest of the groups at Big Woody. Be sure to mention that if they'd just paddle exactly like you that they will surely become better paddlers.

CFS	130<optimal<320
Class	V-
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	290 fpm
Length	.9 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	visual, w/ barometers
Put-in	above Big Wood Falls
Take-out	Pittsburgh or OBJ CG

No Big Names featured a few drops on the upper reaches of Daisy Creek, but the wet rock hill-sliding drops (NR) are probably more enjoyable in a toboggan than a kayak for most.

Directions: Take Slate River Rd (FR 734) north from Crested Butte, and turn left onto FR 734.2A just past the 'town' of Pittsburgh. Rip Your Head Off is just downstream of where the road crosses the NF Slate. Pre-scouting will save time and energy on the water, so consider hiking the shuttle.

North Fork Slate

Set safety in between drops three and four, which requires two climbing ropes, a climbing harness, rappel device and ascenders. It's also a good idea to have safety at The Notch and 100' downstream of The Notch at a very dangerous falls with a deadly hole.

The North Fork of the Slate consists of five main drops, linked by one paddle stroke per drop. This is a high-speed liquid elevator with serious consequences for a missed stroke and the upside down paddler. To make matters worse, on the first and fourth drops, it's incredibly tight with no room to take paddle strokes as you know them. Instead rely on creative strokes that involve the rocks you're sandwiched between, supplemented by proper leaning efforts.

The first drop (D1) is a five' slot with a nasty piton/pin on the bottom left landing and a rock shelf on the right. At certain flows, this shelf will create a river right hole. Attempting a brace will increase the odds of a snatched paddle. Boof the 8' D2 or say hello to the big hole at the base. The 20' D3 comes immediately as you stroke out of D2.

Three-seconds into the run the on-line paddler will land D3 in a cauldron. It's hard to move around in here, but do your best to stay away from the turbulent and undercut left wall.

Depending on flows, D4 could be a 6' drop into a hole or a juicy pourover that leads into the 25' D5. Try to clear the curling wave to the left, but most will end up going into it dead center. This drop has a tendency to kick paddlers into the left wall.

CFS	90<optimal<150
Class	V+ @ optimal
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	50 degrees
Length	15 seconds long
Season	spring, not peak
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Slate River Rd

The only eddy that you want to catch, and the take-out above The Notch is on river left. The Notch deserves the NR rating, and its only been run once, resulting in a heavy beating. Your adrenaline will be completely jacked as you look upstream at an impressive drop that few have ever wanted a piece of.

Directions: Take Slate River Rd (FR 734) north to Pittsburgh. Turn right and continue up the moderate 4WD road (still FR 734) that parallels the North Fork.

-Gary Edgeworth

Macy Burnam Jared Johnson Rip Your Head Off

Upper East

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Gauge CFS	600	1000	1700	2500
Character	first time for slides	small holes appear	wave trains form	feeling stupid?
Class	IV (NR)	IV+ (NR)	V- (NR)	V (V+)
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★
Gradient	180 fpm			
Remoteness	close to a road			
Hitchability	poor, but an easy walk			
Length	1 mile			
Season	May, June, early July			
Gauge	Upper East below Cement Creek			
Put-in	Gothic Road bridge			
Take-out	above Stupid Falls (pre-scout or have a guide)			

The Upper East is the shortest and easiest of the Crested Butte creeks, making it a great run to catch in the late afternoon after a long drive, or a good morning wake-up to a day on OBJ or the Quadruple Crown. There are a handful of slides and short drops on this run over the first ¾ mile, the most noticeable being Midget Wrestler, a 9' off-vert three drops from the put-in. Although far from being technically difficult, aspiring creek boaters will love the waterslide effect of this run, and multiple laps are usually necessary to get a true adrenaline fix. Putting on with good flow will provide fewer than ten minutes of fast'n'fun read'n'run.

The exception to this section is the final V, a stair stepping vert-to-slide called Stupid Falls (60'). A pre-scout of the normal take-out eddy (there are a couple to choose from) is recommended to avoid blundering into this behemoth blind. Passing the IQ test doesn't always mean to portage, since it is run somewhat regularly, but only with ample flow to pad out the rock landing of the first 25'. Sans good flow and this drop could severely hurt. On second thought, this drop could severely hurt with good flow, so do whatever you want, stupid.

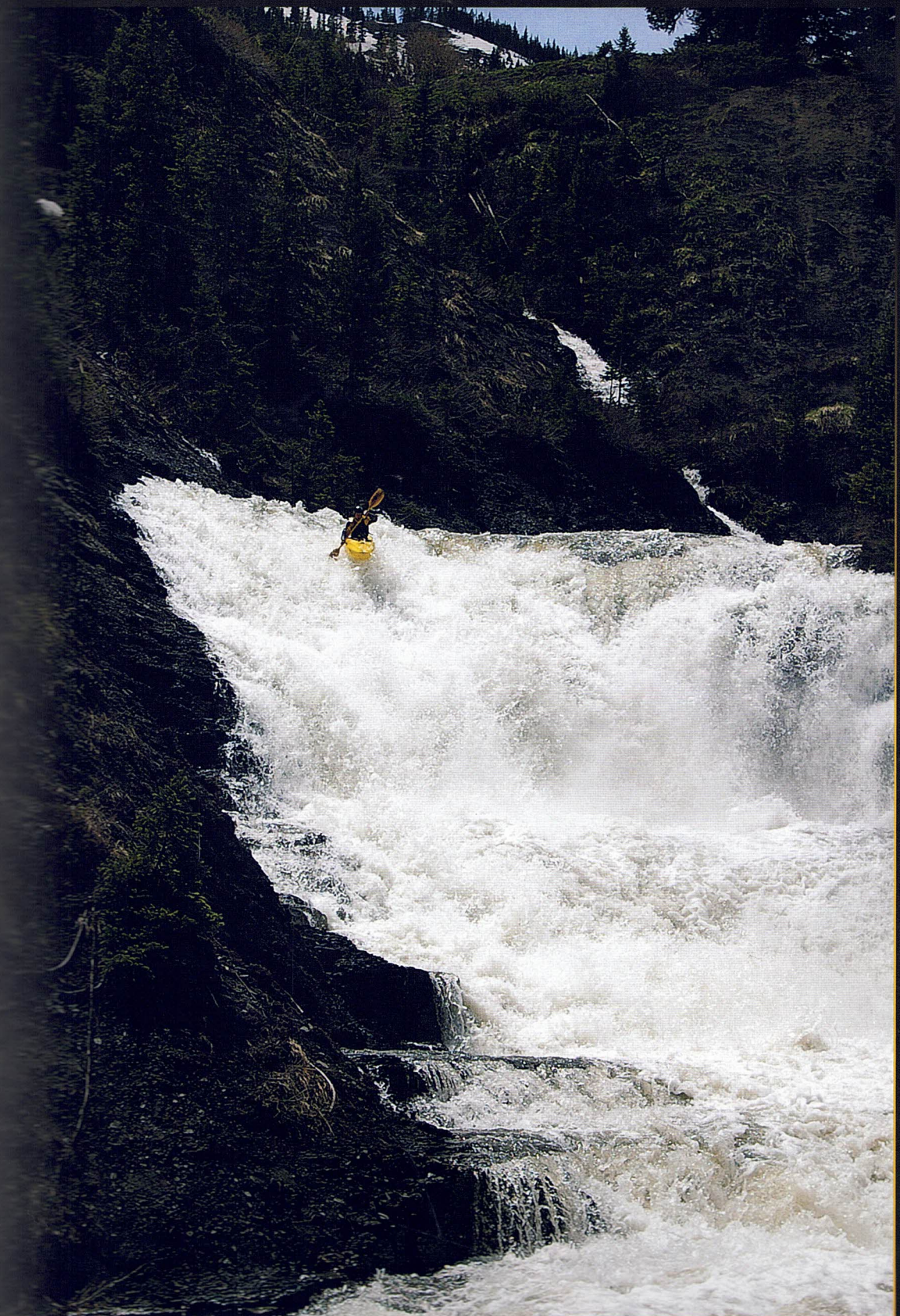
Upper Drop: Just have to run it all? Early Bird Falls is the highlight of a two mile section between Judd Falls near Gothic, and the Gothic Road Bridge. Both sides are shallow and slightly sketchy. Give'er with a good boof.

Directions

From Crested Butte, drive past the Ski Area base until you come to Gothic Road (gravel). Continue down the hill for almost 4 miles to the bridge over the river, and put in here. Although the legality is unclear, I've never heard of any problems using the 4WD road on river left, found approximately 200 yards past the bridge. The take-out is approximately ¾-miles down, requiring a short hike from the river to the road. Pre-scout the take-out from this point. This road is a slippery mess when wet.

Tony Czech Tina Swan Five Minute Blitz

Located to the east of Crested Butte, the Upper East river switchbacks its way out of the high country, leaving behind the historical mining town of Gothic, and the magnificent Schofield Pass.



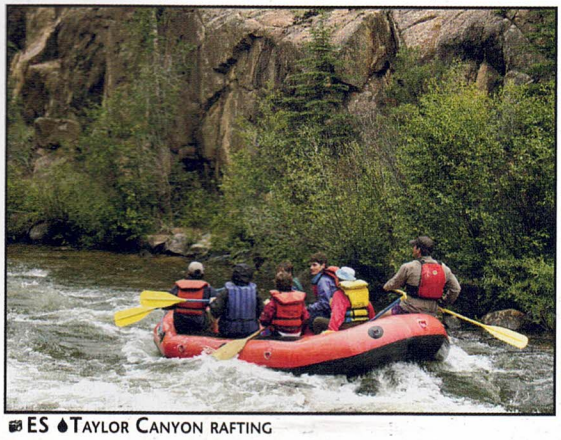
Taylor River

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	200	300	500	750
Character	lower only	T-Canyon min	freestyle options	fun
Canyon Class	III-	III	III+	III+
Lower Class	II	II	II+ (III)	III- (III)
Canyn Quality	not running	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Lower Quality	★★	★★	★★★	★★★
Gradient	85 fpm Canyon, 40 fpm Lower			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	okay			
Length	5 miles Canyon, 7.5 Lower			
Season	May, June (dam release)			
Gauge	Taylor River @ Almont			
Put-in	New Generation or South Bank Launch			
Take-out	South Bank Launch or Almont Post Office			

The Taylor River Valley is stunning and pristine. It's a sight I stop to appreciate every time I crest over to the west side of Cottonwood Pass, undoubtedly on my way to my next Crested Butte adventure. Further east on FR 742 I pass by the slowly dripping Taylor Park Reservoir that feeds the miles of river below, many of which have been bought up by landowners seeking their own private fishing retreat—one that often involves dredging the river to make the perfect trout pool. As a prized fishing possession, the upper reaches of the Taylor are not very river-recreationalist friendly. Fortunately the road meets the river just often enough to offer up a fantastic stretch of the Taylor Canyon, and a Lower mellower stretch.

Taylor Canyon

Starting at the New Generation pull-off is the best start to the class III+ action, with The Slot about a ½-mile downstream. This is the crux of the run, and can usually be run through either the left or right channel, with a number of different eddy options—precisely the beauty of this run.



ES ♦ Taylor Canyon rafting

Eddies are widespread here, hidden among the medium-size rounded granite boulders that create channelized currents for the novice to experiment and experience. At a point where the river comes uncomfortably close to the road there is a great pyramid splat rock on river left. Don't let the playfulness lead to future exhaustion and subsequent lilly-dipping, as Rodeo Rapid comes three quarters into the run. Rodeo offers up a beginner size wave hole up top, and a narrow hole at the bottom where EJ once threw over 30 ends—using only his hands in the early 90's. At least that's what I think happened. One mile downstream is the One Mile Bridge CG, and shortly after is the take-out at South Bank Launch.

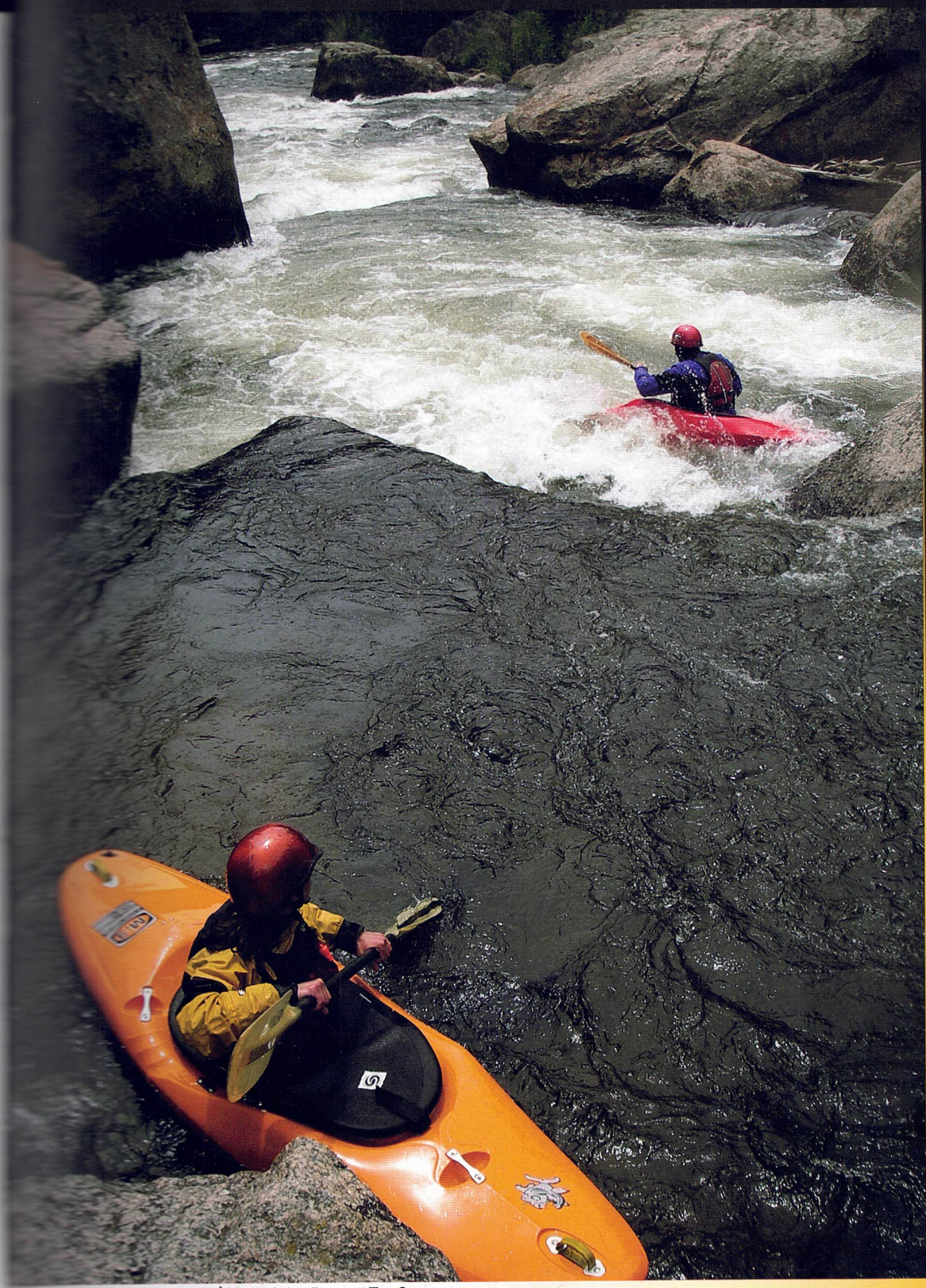
Lower Taylor

The beginner of all beginner runs in the area. Well, almost. In a region that is filled with so many it's hard to pick just one, but the Lower T is in the running. Basically if your first-timer friend can swim, then they'll probably survive the lower as it wanders towards Almont. The run is occasionally roadside, so escape is never out of the question, and rescues are usually easy in the calm waters.

Directions

It's all roadside to FR 742. Almont serves as the lower take-out, just above the confluence with the East River on river left. Put in for the Lower Run at the Spring Creek Access, near where FR 744 leaves the road. South Bank Launch is immediately upstream, and the New Generation put-in can be found 4.5-miles upstream—the preferred put-in for the Canyon Stretch. Coming from or headed to Crested Butte? Use Jack's Cabin Cutoff, also known as FR 813.

The Taylor River valley is stunning and pristine. It's a sight I stop to appreciate every time I get to look down into it, usually while driving the west slope of Cottonwood Pass.



Darren Livingston 🚶 Matt & Jen Booth 💧The Slot

Gunnison Town

Dissecting Highway 50 to the west of the continental divide, this Old West city brings together a melting pot of college students, ranchers, young professionals, hippies, and outdoor enthusiasts to name a few. A common replenishment point for paddlers heading north to Crested Butte, the overshadowed "Gunny," as the locals call it, is home to many outstanding recreational opportunities nearby.

The creeking options are plentiful with nearby Crested Butte, and the easier action picks up on the Taylor, Lake Fork, and the in-town run. A good whitewater park and nearby Fluffy Muff keep the freestylers happy. The Gunny Park has been a work in progress since its ribbon cutting in 2001. Cared for by Western State College students and local kayakers, the features have been offering up big loops. Spending a weekend at the annual river festival is an attractive proposition. Hit up the near-town beginner options, the afternoon freestyle, and spend the rest of the weekend hidden within the Taylor Canyon and Lake Fork Canyon at one of the many river-side camping options.

North Bridge to Gunnison Whitewater Park

This quick and easy section of the Gunnison River is a mellow scenic float that is excellent for beginner paddlers, rafters, and fishermen alike. The run starts at the North Bridge just north of town across from Garlic Mike's Restaurant. From here paddlers will encounter class II whitewater with mild wave trains and a few small holes as they continue downstream past the sandstone cliffs of the Palisades on river right. From here continue more leisurely boating until you float under the Twin Bridges, indicating your approach to the Gunnison Whitewater Park. Access to park facilities and trails are located on river right.

Directions: Put in at North Bridge off Hwy 135 just north of Gunnison (across from Garlic Mike's restaurant). Take out at the Gunnison Whitewater Park just west of town near Twin Bridges on Hwy 50.

CFS	350<min<500<best
Class	II
Quality	★★
Gradient	25 fpm
Length	5 miles
Season	April to October
Gauge	Gunny near Gunny
Put-in	North Bridge
Take-out	Gunny WWP

Gunnison Whitewater Park

The Gunnison River starting at the Gunnison Whitewater Park is the most commonly paddled section of water near town. The park itself has been in a constant state of change due to natural high water events and reconstruction since its development in 2001, but there are two main play features with more potentially on the way. The upper one, Kiddiepool, has been a favorite for those working on their front surf and spins. The lower hole, G-Spot, is more popular for more advanced aerials and combos. The character of these features varies greatly with water levels.

Directions: From Gunnison drive west on Hwy 50, continue past CR 38, and take the next left. This road is not yet named. There's a public parking area at the end of the road and a trail on river right to access the park.

CFS	350<min<600<best
Class	III-
Eddy	great
Quality	★★★★
Season	April to October
Gauge	Gunny near Gunny
Riv Access	near Twin Bridges

Gunnison Park to McCabes Lane

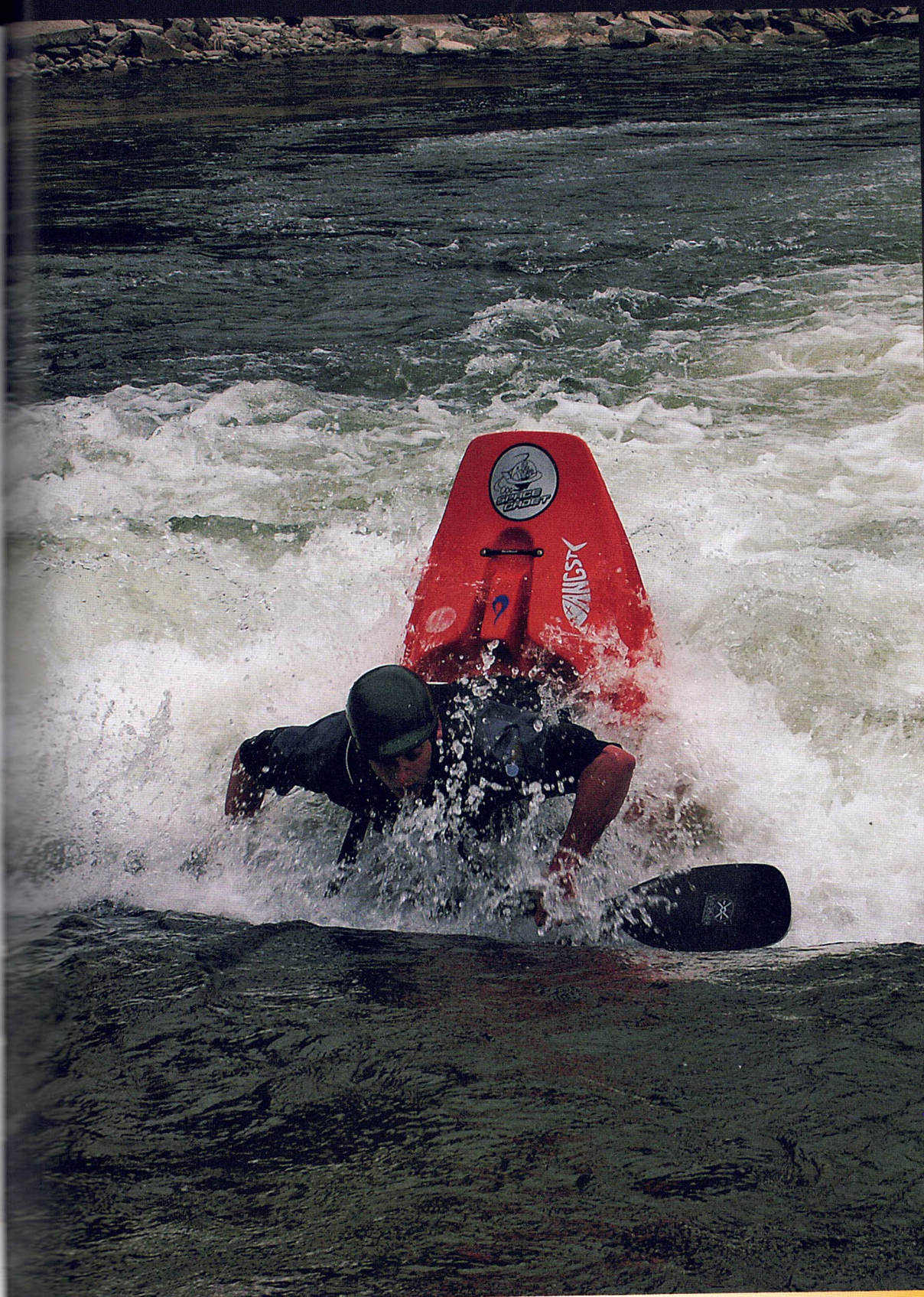
Below the whitewater park is the only major rapid on the town run, Psychedelic Falls. It's a messy drop that has multiple lines, none of which are exceptionally clean. Be advised that the property near this drop, as well as much of the Gunny Town run, is private and scouting has resulted in conflicts in the past. Its best to ask the locals as to the best way to run Psychedelic Falls as it seems to change each season. Below the falls the whitewater is a notch up from the North Bridge run with some on-the-fly playboating and some good eddy lines to get vertical. Take out after the island, on the right side, and walk up the trail to the McCabes Lane parking lot.

Directions: Put in at the Gunnison Whitewater Park just west of town near Twin Bridges on Hwy 50. The take-out is west on Hwy 50 at McCabes Lane on the left, down the road to the parking area.

CFS	350<min<500<best
Class	III- (III+)
Quality	★★
Gradient	20 fpm
Length	3.6 miles
Season	April to October
Gauge	Gunny near Gunny
Put-in	Gunnison Park
Take-out	McCabes Lane

-Bryan Owen (all)

Gunnison is home to many outstanding recreational opportunities nearby. But who really cares about those other sports when you have a bunch of nearby whitewater to paddle.



Chris Larsen Bryan Owen awaiting lift off, Gunny WWP

Lake Fork of the Gunny

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	400	600	800	1000
Character	leave it to fishermen	first timer special	Canyon play	prime
Canyon Class	III (IV-)	III (IV)	III+ (IV+)	IV (V-)
Box Class	III-	III	III	III+
Cyn Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Box Quality	★	★★	★★★	★★★
Gradient	30 fpm average, 55 fpm for Canyon			
Remoteness	Canyon is roadside, rest is semi-roadside with private property issues			
Hitchability	okay			
Length	Canyon 4.5 miles, Gate to RB 7 miles, Box 11 miles, Town 3 miles (variable)			
Season	May to July			
Gauge	Lake Fork @ Gateview CG			
Put-in	Red Bridge CG for Canyon, Ryan Ranch Bridge for Box			
Take-out	Gateview CG for Canyon, The Gate CG for Box			

The Lake Fork Gunnison is a high-quality river that most users aren't very fond of sharing. Battles over The Gate to Red Bridge section have been ongoing among landowners and river users—particularly a lawsuit filed by Gateview Ranch Inc and Timber Bridge Ranch Inc against a commercial outfitter in 2001. The right-to-float issue heated up on a statewide level, with the Lake Fork on center stage. Things haven't exactly settled down, as American Whitewater and affiliate associations continue to mediate recreational use and landowner rights.

Strife aside, the area is scenic. Off the beaten path on Hwy 50, Lake City continues to maintain its rustic mountain town feel, as if it stopped aging during Colorado's tourist industry boom. Class II to V+ whitewater within a short drive surround the city, and the camping options are plentiful.

Lake Fork Canyon

This is the lowest and one of the better stretches of whitewater on the Lake Fork of the Gunnison. Predominately class III, the run also has a sampling of class IV whitewater. The play is good at certain levels, making the 4.5-mile run a good way to fill a day with whitewater. You'll be done with shuttle and in a Lake City bar in time for happy hour, undoubtedly to talk about the relaxing and fun day on the river. Intermediates should stick with the playboat to prolong the experience, and beginners can opt for the creek boat to get through the bigger rapids.

The rapids aren't that technically difficult, but they can get big as flows get high. The best play is mid-rapid, and the first rapid of note is Surprise Ledge. This was the first ledge that I ever ran, and it could be your first. The crux of the run is Rattlesnake, which comes up next. Avoid the right log jam and its smooth sailing to Last Chance. Multiple lines go, but beware of the right wall at low flow.

The Gate to Red Bridge (no beta box)

This is the host run of the legal problems. When things aren't overly sketchy (check for updates) the whitewater is enjoyable. Seven miles of class II ranchland cruising entertain the beginner, and the run can be combined with the upstream section for an 18-mile class II marathon.

Lake Fork Box

This is a class III walled float parallel to the out-of-reach Hwy 149 to the north of Lake City. This eleven-mile stretch is committing enough to have a wilderness feel. Winding through the 100' deep gorge will keep newbies busy, and an occasional log requires attention and action.

Lake City Town (no beta box)

Putting on Henson Creek provides the longest stretch of in-town class II+, but the Lake Fork put-in is sufficient. This one to three mile section has an obvious take-out at the north edge of town, off of Hwy 149.

Directions

To reach the Red Bridge CG put-in for the Canyon stretch, find Hwy 149 on a map, and drive to the area north of Lake City. Use 25 Rd if coming from the west, and Hwy 149 if coming from the east on Hwy 50. The Red Bridge CG is two miles north of Hwy 149 on 25 Rd. Take out at the Gateview CG, at the end of 64 Rd.

The Gate CG is near mm 89 on Hwy 49, and the best put-in for the Gate to Red Bridge stretch. Take out at The Gate CG, and put in at Ryan Ranch Bridge near mm 79 to run the Lake Fork Box. The lake city run is easy to figure out.

SNAP DRAGON DESIGN
425 957 3575 phone www.snapdragondesign.com fax 425 957 4547

PHOTO © SAMANTHA BRUNNER

Henson Creek

Henson Creek offers up a sheer walled, yet roadside box canyon, just outside of the National Historic Mining Town known as Lake City. The Henson area is surrounded by snow capped peaks and classic high elevation San Juan scenery. Unfortunately tailing piles, dilapidated building structures and two decommissioned dams dot the course of this restored creekbed—relics of Colorado's late 19th century gold boom, and subsequent bust. The lower seven miles of the creek above Lake City are the most commonly boated. Starting below Capitol Flats there is a beautiful three mile roadside stretch of class III/IV. This stretch can serve as a warm up for the box canyon downstream or as a local intermediate's afterwork special.

Beginning at Nellie Creek the road climbs up and onto the rim of an imposing, slot-type canyon where the commitment level increases significantly. A scout of the tight spots for wood on the way up is always a good idea. The walls are quite intimate at points and portaging options may become limited if confronted with an unseen hazard. At reasonable flow the rapids are not super tough for the expert paddler, but things get pretty juicy at higher flows. An S-Turn bedrock drop is the first significant horizon, about a 1/2-mile below Nellie Creek. About a mile later the canyon walls tighten their grip as you paddle through a chiseled out hole in the first dam. Between the dams there is a drop that is generally full of wood and requires an early portage on the left. A few more significant rapids remain, one at the second dam. The river left wall eventually recedes and the road returns to near river level. One more juicy drop, with back to back holes, is found roadside near the take-out.

For those looking to get adventurous there is more action upstream of Capitol Flats in the Whitmore Falls area and above. A couple sets of large runnable drops are conveniently roadside and are broken up by unrunnable cascades and boogie water. A fair bit of scouting will be required prior to putting on to this V+ section. Whitmore Falls itself is a clean 20' spout into a pool, but the lead-in is a tight mini-box that looks *tricky*.

CFS	250<min
Class	V- (NR) V+/NR Whitmore Area
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	130 fpm action
Length	7 miles or variable
Season	May, June, July
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Rd 20

Directions: The take-out for the box canyon run is about a 1/2-mile west of Lake City on Rd 20 at some pullouts and camping spots. The put-in is either at Capitol Flats for the warm-up or at Nellie Creek for the quick fix. Be weary of private property just below Capitol Flats. Whitmore Falls is at the big turnout on the left after entering back into the trees west (upstream) of Capitol Flats. The highest reasonable put-in for this upper section is at Thoreau's Cabin, but there is plenty of access in between, so suss it out for yourself.

Cebolla Creek

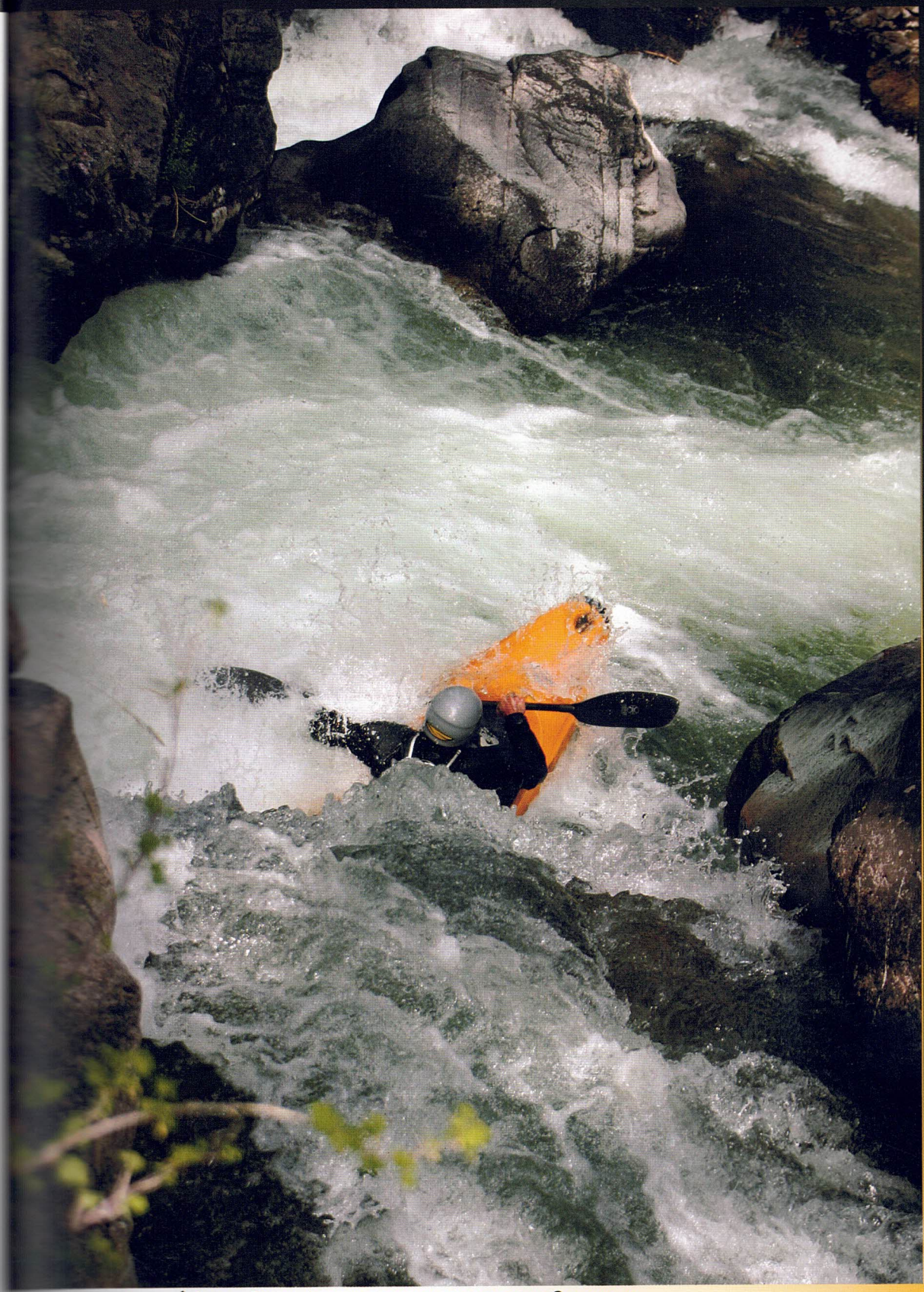
For the non-adrenaline types in the Gunny Valley still looking for a remote adventure, this is your creek. The Cebolla (onion) flows through a healthy swath of BLM land south of Blue Mesa Reservoir. The difficulty of the boating rarely crosses into class III, but the creek remains interesting for almost the entire ten miles from the highway to the reservoir due to frequent wildlife sightings and above par scenery.

There are a fair amount of private in-holdings along this stretch where a stealth portage of a fence or two may provide the most exciting moments of the day. When possible, remain in your boat to avoid confrontations and/or trespassing. Owners of breakdown fishing rods looking to catch their lunch on a long and easy creek run will find the reservoir paddle at the end worth it. Others may not. Even newbies looking for mellow action will be disappointed with the whitewater but hey, the reservoir paddle will give you plenty of time to perfect your forward stroke. If it's windy opt for a run without an open flatwater paddle out—unless you are some kind of weird sadistic pain freak, and in that case be my guest and fight the wind. I'm sure it builds character.

Directions: The take-out is opposite Cebolla Creek on the north side of Blue Mesa Reservoir. Park where you will be visible from reservoir level, about two miles east of the Hwy 50 bridge over the reservoir. This way you can aim for your rig. The mouth of the Cebolla Valley should be visible across the reservoir. To get to the put-in, head east on Hwy 50 to Hwy 149. Turn south, roll over the Gunnison and continue until you find the Cebolla Creek crossing, pull over and put on.

CFS	150<good
Class	III (Ps)
Quality	★★
Gradient	61 fpm
Length	10 on creek, 4.5 Lake
Season	May to July
Gauge	visual, or Lake Fork barometer
Put-in	Hwy 149
Take-out	north side Blue Mesa

EXPLORATION OF HENSON CREEK HAS BEEN LIGHT OVER THE YEARS, BUT A HANDFUL OF EXPLORERS LOOKING TO RUN THE SHIT HAVE COME AWAY WITH VERY INVITING TALES OF ADVENTURE.



JEREMY LAUCKS 🚶 GORDON DALTON 💧STOMPING BOOFS IN THE MICRO-CREEK, COTTONWOOD

Cinnamon Gorge

This is an upper section of the Lake Fork that you probably haven't heard of. Cinnamon Gorge sits between two 14,000' massifs, Sunshine and Handies Peak. Between these behemoths lies an equally impressive 60' waterfall—possibly the tallest runnable vert in the state.

Jeremy Laucks and I ran this section in the summer of 2005 after being tempted by a vague tip, received in an unmarked envelope in a dark alley of Silverton. Scouting from the high road on river left reveals a deep, dark cleft in the earth, with occasional basso-profundo rumbles and a light mist rising from the abyss. Sketchy (very sketchy) scrambling to the edge of the canyon reveals the lip of the falls emerging from an ominous slot canyon—looking a bit like Adrenaline Falls on acid.

The run is mainly IV+ and V- drops with Colorado's usual suspects of wood and mining debris. There are numerous four or five' long steel rods bent in semi-circles clogging the creek. They must have been part of a sluice box or other mining apparatus that ran along the creek, because they are ever-present throughout the latter part of the run and could pose a hazard, along with other debris.

Ironically, the hefty 60' waterfall in the heart of the canyon also appears to be a remnant of the mining days. Whatever its history, this drop will have your heart pounding at the lip—and it may knock the wind out of you at the bottom. It's a serious drop with a serious hit at the bottom. Landmark the waterfall scout eddy, and hike up and over a rocky point on river-right to scout the landing pool. You could potentially carry around the big drop on river right, but it would be steep, and you might need rope work to re-enter the gorge after the falls.

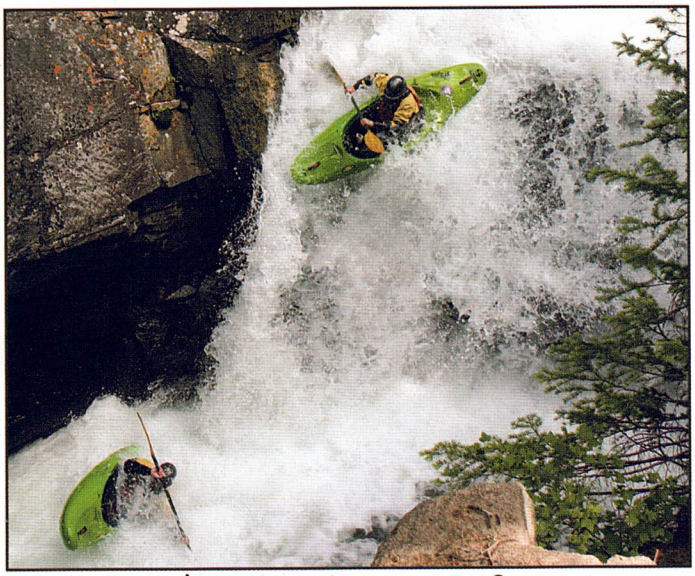
Below the falls is a trashy and tight little rapid that we ran down the right. After this the rapids improve in quality a little bit, but soon you'll pass by the ghost town site of Sherman and eventually reach the Mill Gulch CG.

CFS	200<min<300<idea
Class	V+ (60 footer)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	190 fpm
Length	1 mile (variable)
Season	June, July
Gauge	Lake Fork (barometer)
Put-in	above Sherman
Take-out	Mill Gulch CG

Directions: To reach Cinnamon Gorge, take 30 Rd up the Lake Fork of the Gunnison from Lake San Cristobal. The 18X Rd (30 Rd in Gazetteer) leads to the Mill Gulch CG, a little downstream of the former Sherman townsite. Respect private property in Sherman. To reach the put-in, drive up 4 Rd toward Burrows Park and Cinnamon Pass and park at whatever access point looks best. We chose an area near an avalanche slide.

Cottonwood Creek

If you want some more action, check out the other main tributary of the Lake Fork, Cottonwood Creek, which flows into the Lake Fork near Sherman. Difficult and steep mini-creeking in a lush little gorge ups the experience on this adrenaline inducing ½-mile section. The run is roughly roadside to the 18X Rd and we found a 400 fpm section that had a 15' falls, tight slots, and several undercuts to avoid with crisp boof strokes. Scout it out as you drive up the road and pick your run. You could hike your own shuttle or take out above Sherman.



GORDON DALTON JEREMY LAUCKS MINI-CREEKING ON COTTONWOOD

Directions: Drive up 18X Rd along Cottonwood Creek two or three miles, or less depending on your tolerance for woody drops. There is a high-quality 1/2 mile section in the middle. Choose your own adventure creeking.

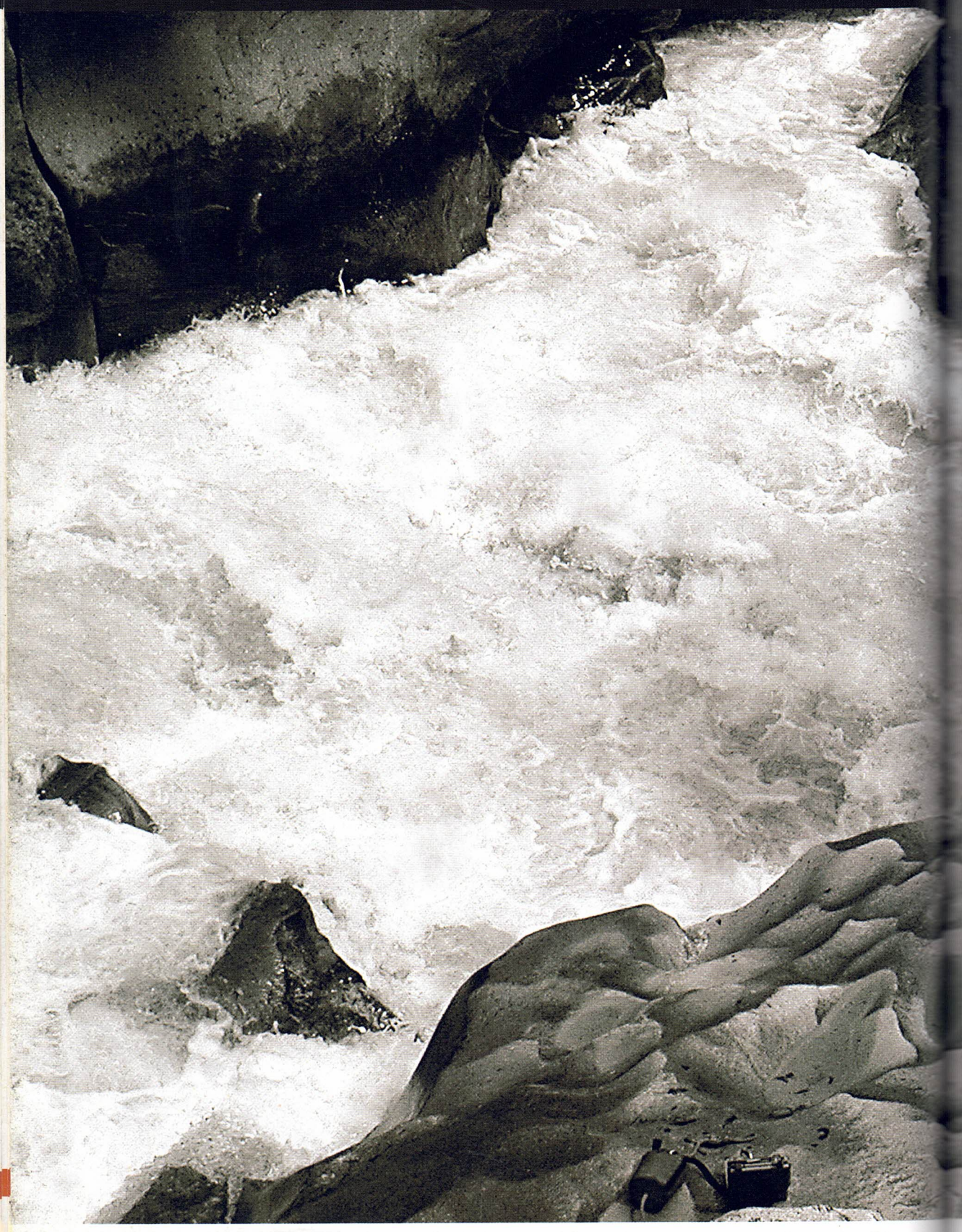
-Gordon Dalton (both)

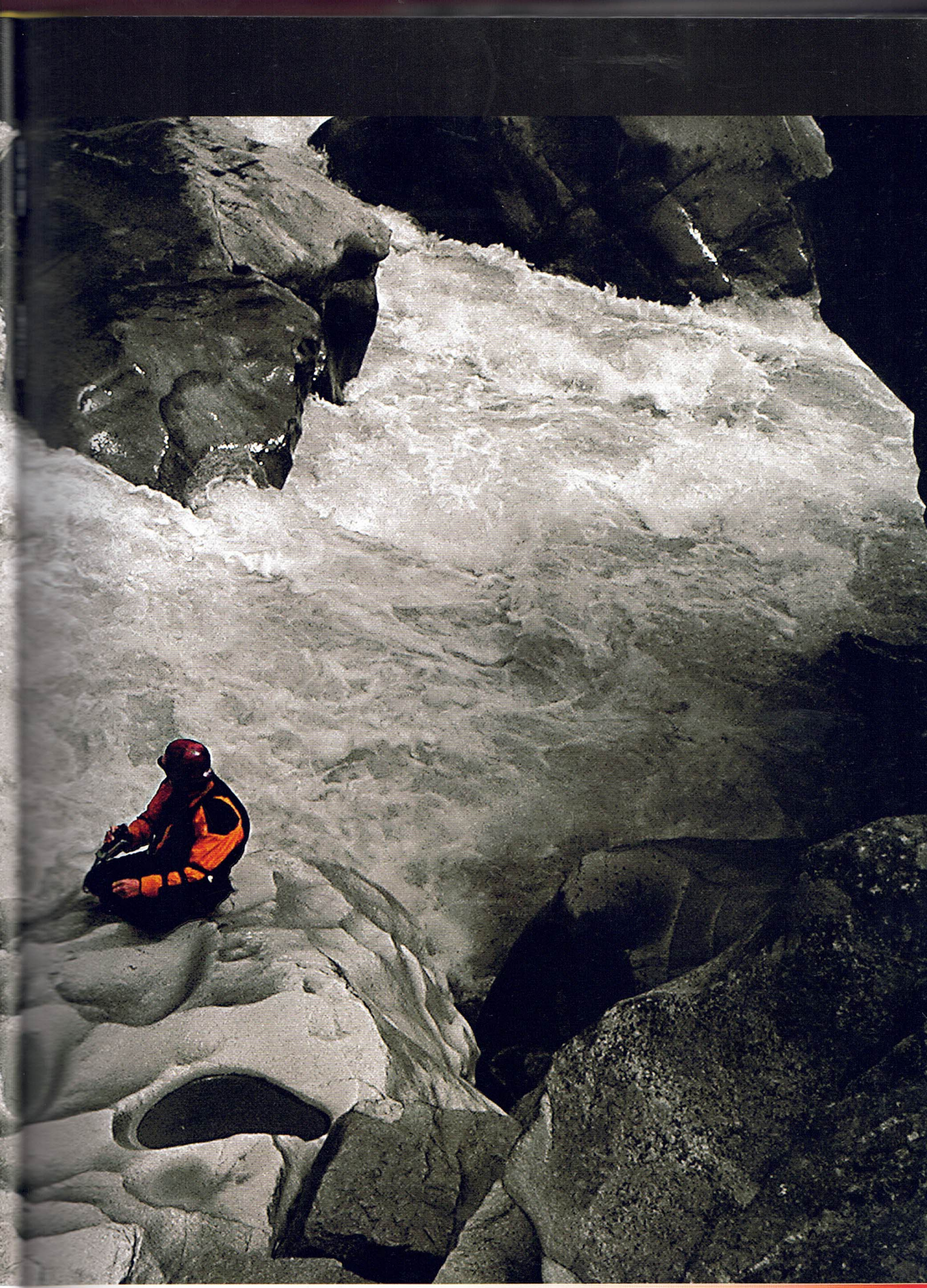
CFS	130<min<220<ideal
Class	V
Quality	★★★
Gradient	350 fpm
Length	1/2 mile or more
Season	June
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	18X Rd

Cinnamon Gorge sits between two 14,000′ massifs, Sunshine and Handies Peak. Hidden between the gorge walls lies an equally impressive 60′ waterfall—just cause for an increased heart rate.

Jeremy Laucks Gordon Dalton A sweet freefall on Cinnamon Falls

Clarks Fork Yellowstone





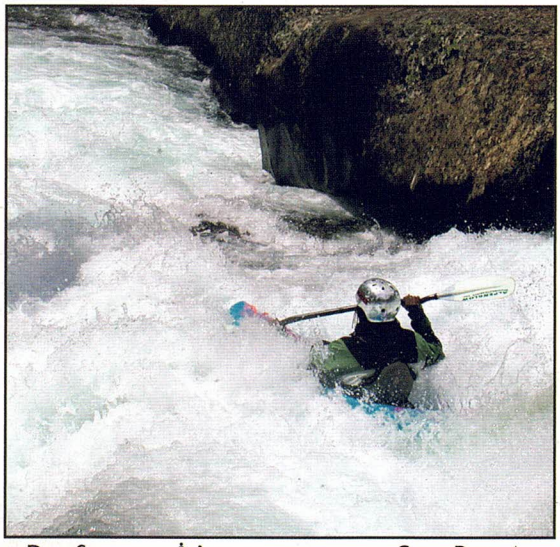
Dave Schroeder Todd Andrew Balls to the Wall, The Box, Day One

Stix & Stones

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	200	300	400	600
Character	stones	good	padded	stones?
Class	V+ (NRs, Ps)	V+ (NRs, Ps)	V+ (NRs, Ps)	NR
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Gradient	210 fpm, pool drop			
Remoteness	thick forest and rugged terrain, with a road nearby			
Hitchability	fair			
Length	4.7 miles (takes all day)			
Season	May, June, July			
Gauge	visual, or Clarks Fork near Belfry at 1000+/- (barometer)			
Put-in	Chief Joseph Trailhead			
Take-out	Fox Creek Campground			

Located in the upper reaches of the Clark's Fork drainage, the Stix and Stones section sees little traffic relative to the rest of the region, and rightfully so. With ultra high quality neighbors, the Honeymoon section and The Box, most teams of experts will seldom make the extra trip to this hidden gnar-fest. Those that do will be faced with a schizophrenic river that contains miles of emerald green pools filled with trout right out of a fairy tale journey, interlaced by V+ drops and multiple portages.

Stix is an understatement in the first half of the run, where paddlers will be forced to portage almost every major drop in the first two miles due to massive logjams (60 PBR reward to the person that cleans the wood out to match Montana Surf's contribution). The falls that are free of wood are NR—the put-in drop, Kicker Falls, which has been run with non-inviting results, and a 25' falls onto a 5' rock ledge which signals the end of the top-half portage-fest. Paddlers with a guide will have much more fun in this section, since the portage routes vary from a light stroll to hideous bushwhacking and boat passing.



DAVE SCHROEDER ⛹ ALEX, THE KIND-HEARTED COSTA RICAN 💧EARLY DROP

Two and a half miles in, salvation comes in the form of Chicken Head Falls, marked by a large rock pillar that, well, looks like a chicken's head. The triple-tier drop features a shallow-lipped 15'er, followed by a powerful 10' falls, and finishes with a long, low angle slide. Although this may be the most quality drop on the run, the action continues with the 12' Dead Moose Falls, and shortly thereafter a very-likely unrunnable falls dropping into a gorge. Portage right, and put in where you feel comfortable in the steep action. Enjoy a few more portages and V+ rapids before finishing the pool drop with Kelly is Crazy Falls, recognizable by the 15' vert entrance. Although the bottom was clogged with wood my last trip, we were still able to run the entrance, and do a river level portage on the left to get some okay action below. The more obvious portage is above on river right.

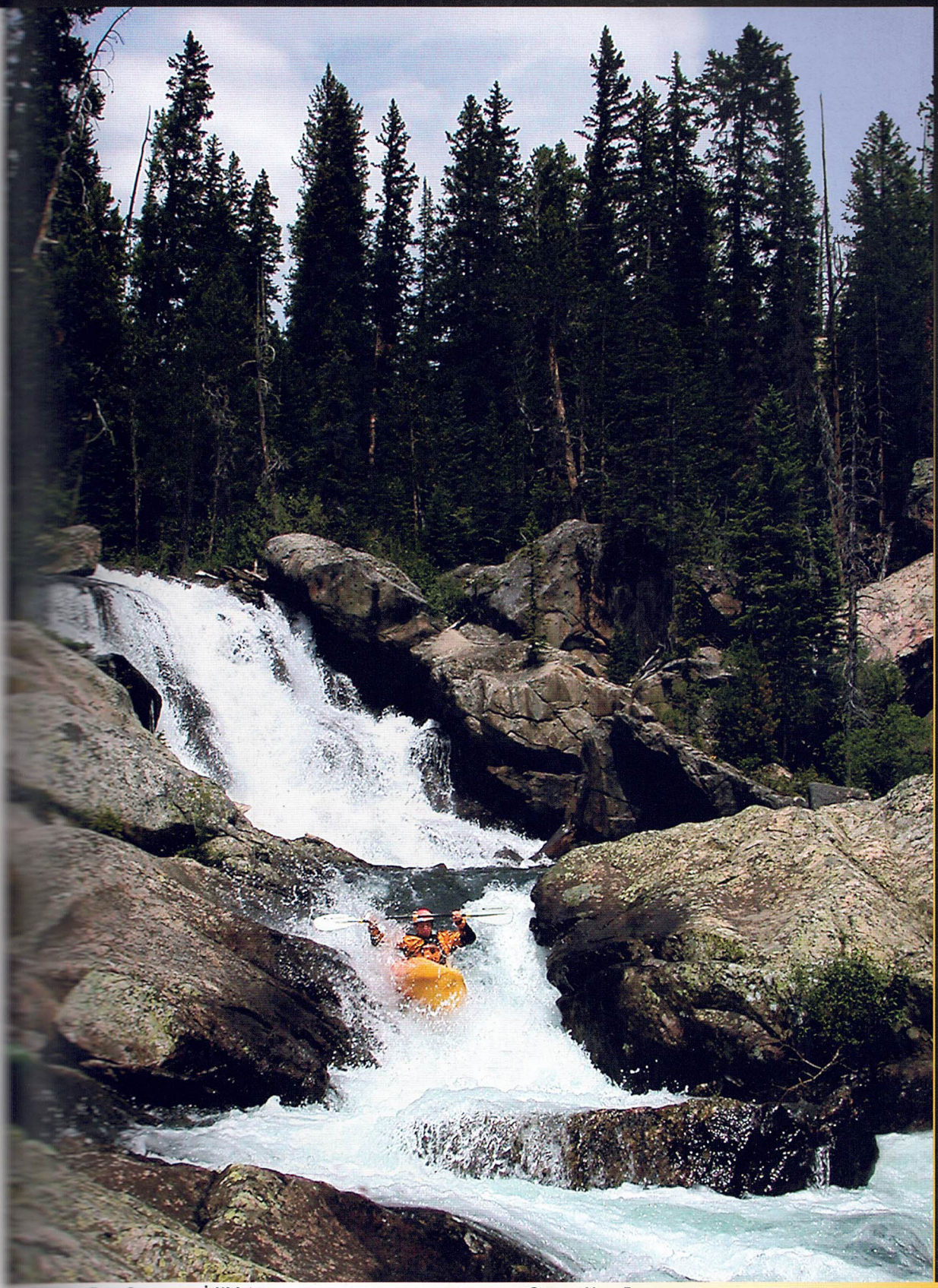
The last 2/3-mile of paddling switches character to a very fast and rocky boulder garden, with some wood potential to watch for. Eddy hop when needed, and avoid the sharp rocks.

Class V+ paddlers will absolutely love this run, and class V- paddlers will absolutely portage this run. All paddlers will marvel at the intensity of the mosquitoes in both number and size.

Directions

Drive 7 miles east from Cooke City (Cooke is in MT, the run is WY) on the Beartooth Hwy (Hwy 212) to the take-out at Fox Creek Campground. The put-in is 3 miles east of Cooke City at the Chief Joseph Trailhead. Don't get lured into the first ledge drop, hike downstream to scout/portage Kicker Falls and most likely put in at the base of the falls.

A SCHIZOPHRENIC RIVER THAT CONTAINS MILES OF EMERALD GREEN POOLS FILLED WITH TROUT RIGHT OUT OF A FAIRY TALE JOURNEY, INTERLACED BY V+ DROPS AND MULTIPLE PORTAGES.



DAVE SCHROEDER KM THE END OF THE PORTAGES, ONE DROP ABOVE CHICKEN HEAD FALLS

Day Stretch & Honeymoon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	500	800	1400	2500
Character	Day Strech min	Honeymoon min	worth the drive	powerful, worthy
Day Class	IV (V+ x2)	IV (V+)	IV (V+)	IV+ (V+)
Honey Class	V-	V	V (V+s)	V+
Day Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★
Honey Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	50 fpm Day, 90 fpm Honeymoon			
Remoteness	*close* to a road, but occasionally trapped			
Hitchability	okay			
Length	4 miles Day Stretch, Honeymoon 3 miles			
Season	May to August			
Gauge	Clarks Fork @ Belfry			
Put-in	Historical pull-out or Chief Joseph Hwy bridge			
Take-out	Chief Joseph Hwy bridge or Crandall Creek take-out			

The Day Stretch and Honeymoon sit perfectly above The Box, serving as the gatekeepers to the much more difficult whitewater downstream. For paddlers hoping to improve their skills enough to take on The Box one day, these runs serve as a nice training ground. Pushy, boulder garden rapids are commonplace, but a number of sneak lines and portage routes exist in this less-committing environment. Spend a few days lapping these sections without mishap and you may be ready for a guided tour of the wilderness downstream. Even when not kayaking, it is worth checking out the gorged section of Crandall near its confluence with the Clarks Fork.

Day Stretch

Above The Box a fine day run exists, exquisitely scenic and much less committing than any of the other runs in the area. There is still some stout whitewater, including two heavy drops (V+) that are easily portaged. Most of the run is made up of quality class IV boulder gardens, attracting a wide variety of intermediate to expert paddlers, playboaters and creekboaters. Water levels can affect the difficulty significantly, but solid braces and a confident look will see you through the majority of the run at higher flows. At peak flow you are on your own.

Coin Slot is the first major rapid and is regularly portaged river right or left via a patented Wyo-otter slide. If you are in your creekboat you may consider running this one but the undercuts have proven to be very real. Some cool moves through good whitewater follow the Coin Slot. Adrenaline is the other bit of steep, chunky, and undercut Clarks Fork material. Duel at your own risk. The portage is left. One more nice slotted move and a few more shots at a wave-wheel or pirouette flatten into a mile long pool with a riffle or two before the take-out.

Honeymoon Canyon

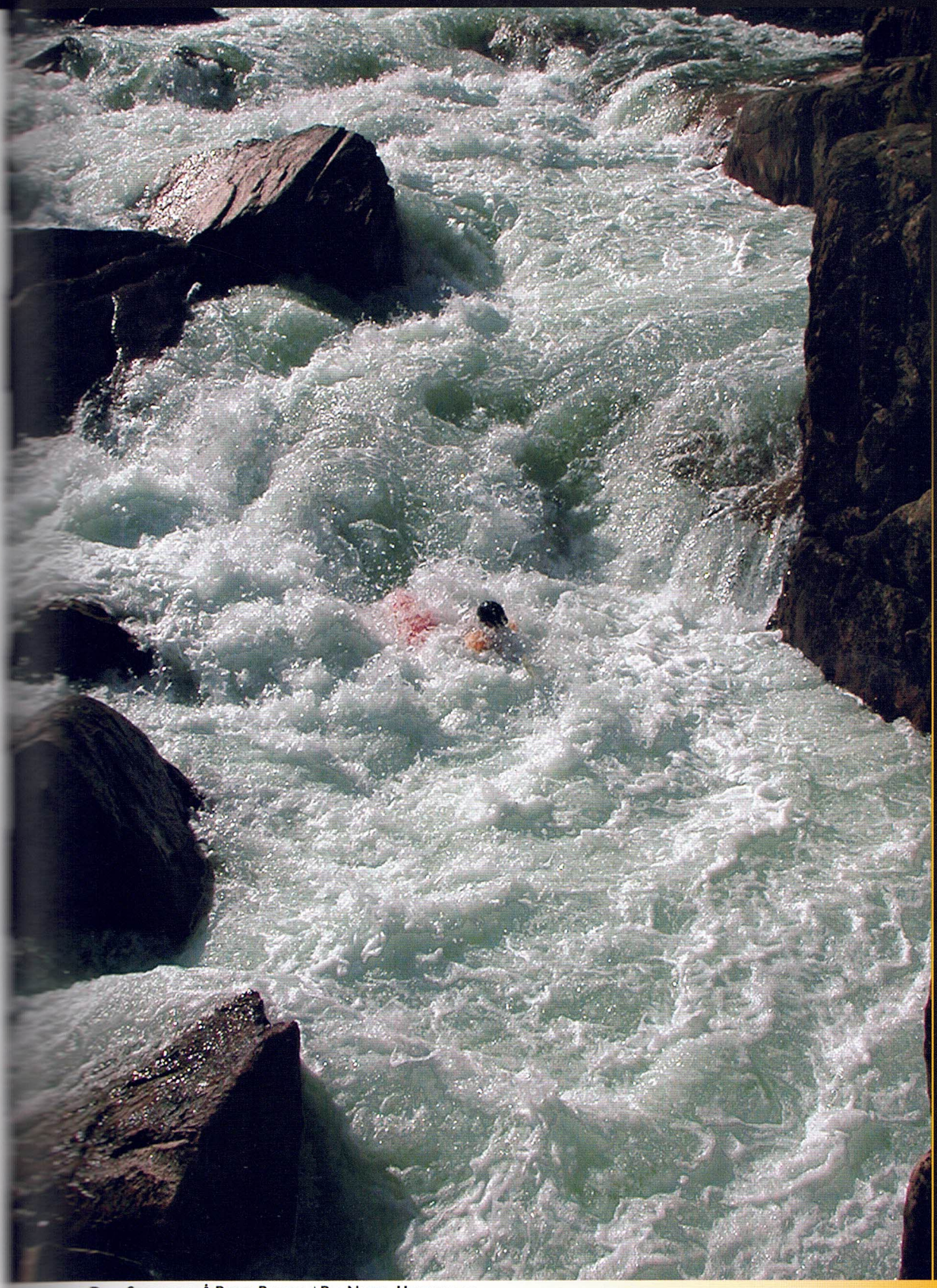
This is a high quality piece of whitewater that serves as the integral lead-in to The Box. Luckily for those without the time or need to test their poise in the heart of an isolated box canyon, you can get a taste of this special place by taking out at Crandall Creek.

The entire run is a definite step up from the Day Stretch but the difficulty is close enough that confident intermediate paddlers will want to get on both stretches while in the area. Alice and Ralph are the first rapids of note. Suckhole, which is 30 feet below Alice on the right, has been the site of multiple subterranean swims. Ron Lodders has seen at least six paddlers go through the tunnel—some of them more than once! Bear Creek forms a steep and fun low-volume slide cascading in below Ralph on the left. Some be-bop leads to the two biggest drops on the run, both of which are scouted/portaged on the left. Big Nasty comes first, and is portaged more often than the equally challenging but somewhat more clean Trixie. Big Nasty actually becomes more runnable as the water comes up to med-high water levels, but this just means the dark places are covered up—not that they've disappeared. Below Trixie is Crandall Creek rapid, a chunky and shallow rock pile that is the final runnable gradient. Take out immediately at the confluence with Crandall Creek, safely above the Green Monster portage.

Directions

Take Hwy 296 northwest of Dead Indian Hill. The Honeymoon take-out is the same as Crandall. Chief Joseph Hwy bridge is the access between the two runs. Put in three miles north of the Painter's Store, near a Historical Marker on Hwy 296.

Pushy, boulder garden rapids are commonplace, but a number of sneak lines and portage routes exist on these slightly gorged and beautifully scenic sections that guard the entrance to The Box.



Dave Schroeder Barry Bohrer Big Nasty, Honeymoon

Crandall & Sunlight Creek

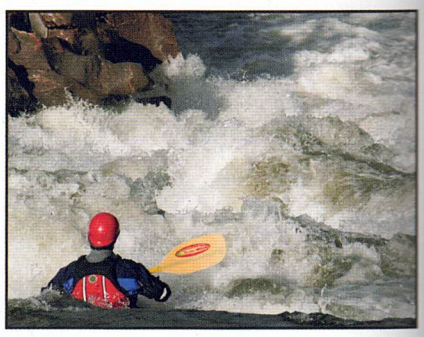
Crandall Creek

Spectacular mini-gorges are found on the short but sweet Crandall Creek. If you like carved and polished granite, this run is for you. It won't take much time and it can be combined with any of the other short runs in the area to fill out a day. Looking down from the road crossing on the Chief Joseph Highway it is impossible not to be tantalized by the gradient and small gorge walls sprouting up downstream. It just looks fun, and it is.

The first drop funnels steeply down into a boat wide chute. It's very skinny and at certain levels packs a punch. This is the most likely portage. A few more quality class IV drops exist downstream and the scenery, though not on the scale of The Box, is still fantastic. Stop in the jade green hallway of flatwater near the end of the run for a quick cliff jump, before you continue on down to the confluence with the Clarks Fork. Yell a freedom cry as you freefall into the mountain water.

Crandall Creek is heavily influenced by the ever-changing wood situation. The narrow gorges tend to floss themselves often, but the narrow walls can create log jams that are tough to portage, and thus can make the run a no-go.

Directions: The put-in is at the Crandall Creek Trailhead, upstream and west of the bridge on Hwy 296 (Chief Joseph). From Hwy 296 the take-out is down a dirt road a 1/2 mile south of the Crandall Creek bridge, at a trash collection point. Turn right at the fork.



CFS	200<min<400<best
Class	IV+<600<V
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	85 fpm
Length	2.2 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Hwy 296 bridge
Take-out	dirt road nr Crandall

Sunlight Creek

Sunlight Creek is a good creek that has been overlooked for many years. Once thought to be full of wood, it is in fact a forested boulder-garden stream. Expect III+ creeking at lower flows and a difficulty that rises with the water level to V-. Two quick strokes out of the eddy and paddlers line up for the biggest drop on the creek. A second crux section awaits just after the halfway point, and then things settle down for good.

A few adventurous kayakers have paddled the section below the take-out—a class V undertaking. Pre-scout this lower gorge to avoid getting boxed-in and to check for new wood.

Directions: From Hwy 296, drive FR 104 to the old bridge immediately upstream. To get to the put-in turn south onto Sunlight Road (FH 101), veer right in a mile, and go six miles to the put-in at Shell Falls.

CFS	300<min<600
Class	IV
Quality	★★★
Gradient	225 fpm action
Length	6 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual or 1.5k @ Belfry
Put-in	Sunlight Falls
Take-out	Highway bridge

Grinell Creek (tributary of North Fork Shoshone)

This creek contains an excellent boulder garden riverbed that requires hike-and-run access. Semi-steep, non-stop action is the norm, but be heads up for the tricky slot move at the end. Be very aware of grizzlys on this one. As in really big bears.

Hike-In: From the access road you'll immediately start hiking along the river. As the trail depletes, stay next to the river, and put in where comfortable. It's possible to put in as high as the West Fork.

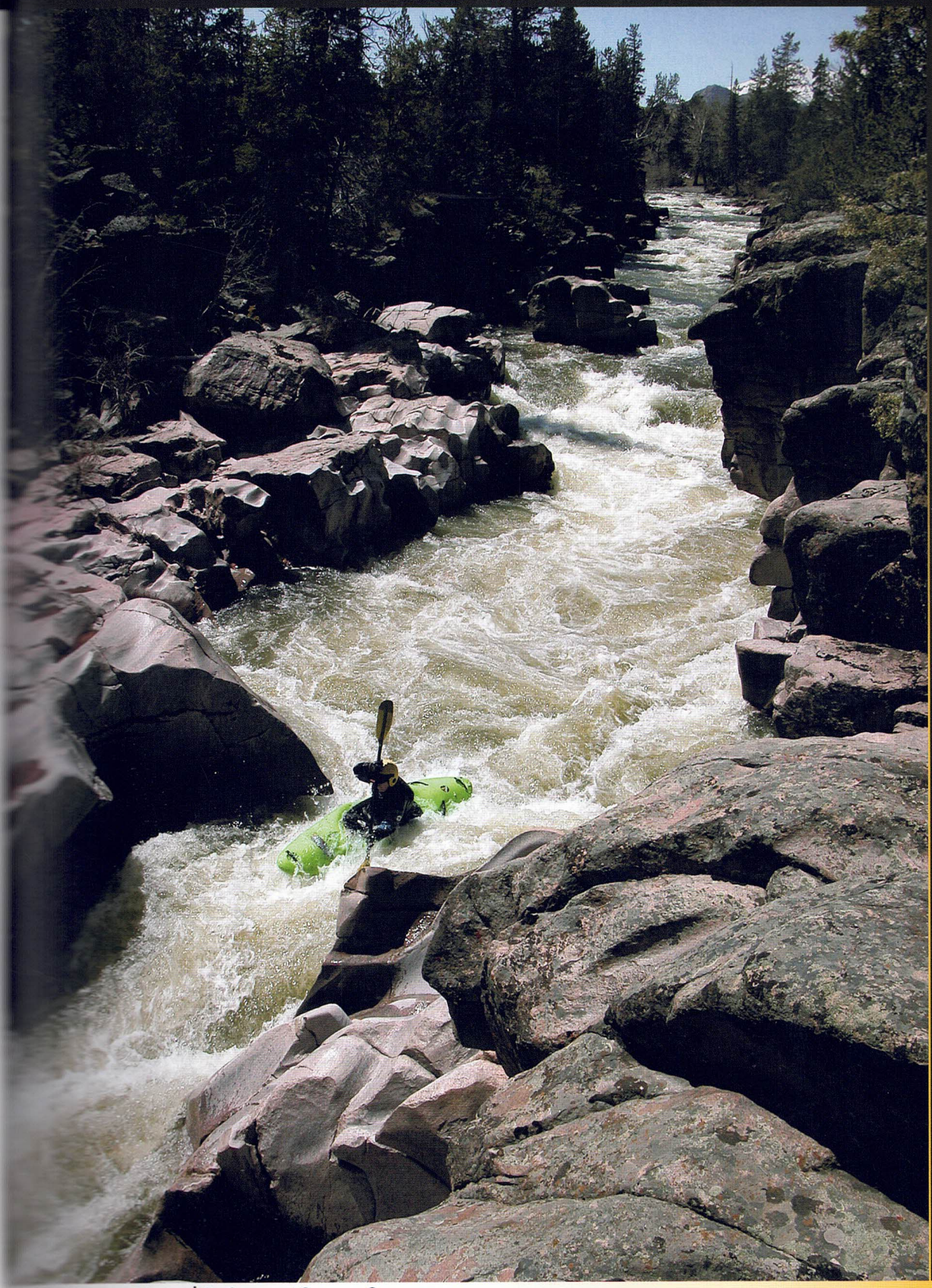
Directions: From Cody drive west on Hwy 14 (16/20) to Grinell Creek, near Pahaska Tepee. You can hike in on the trail on river left, but it is recommended to shorten the hike by getting access rights from the Shoshone Lodge, to reach a road that leads to a trail on river right. Take out at the Hwy 14 bridge, or at the confluence with the NF Shoshone.

-Aaron Mulkey (Sunlight & Grinell)

CFS	130<min<250<best
Class	IV+<200<V
Quality	★★
Gradient	310 fpm
Length	2.5 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	visual, or NF Shoshone near 3000 cfs
Put-in	West Fork
Take-out	Hwy 14 bridge

Todd Gillman ⛹ Shane Robinson ♦class IV action

Looking down from the road crossing on the Chief Joseph Highway it is impossible not to be tantalized by the gradient and small gorge walls sprouting up downstream.



Aaron Mulkey Ed Conning Crandall Creek entrance

The Box

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	500	700	1100	1500
Character	brave	warrior	freedom cry	weyakin
Class	V (V+s, P x6)	V (V+s, P x6)	V+ (NRs, P x6)	V+ (NRs, P x6)
Quality	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	430 fpm max, 270 fpm average (not including Honeymoon or flats)			
Remoteness	very high			
Hitchability	poor, but day-one car-camp/shuttle retrieval possible			
Length	25 miles			
Season	late June to early August (narrow window on way down)			
Gauge	Clarks Fork nr Belfry			
Put-in	Chief Joseph Hwy bridge			
Take-out	Old Hwy 292			

The Clarks Fork carves a Wild and Scenic path between the Beartooth Mountains to the north, and the Absaroka Range to the south near the Montana/Wyoming border. Below the Hwy 296 crossing, and the famous Painters Store, the river descends into the wilderness of THE BOX. A profound incision that is truly deserving of its definitive name. It is the grandest, deepest and most sustained box canyon in the southern Rockies. The two to three-day journey through the heart of the gorge is considered by many to be *the* test piece for aspiring expedition paddlers in the Rockies.

The heavy winds that sweep the sheer-walled granite cliffs of The Box still carry with them the brave and determined spirit of the Nez Perce, or Nimiipuu (the people). The Nimiipuu befriended Lewis and Clark, for which the river is named, but soon after were forced by encroaching Europeans into a desperate war for their ancestral lands. They refused to go silently into the night, and were able to elude capture by the US Cavalry for a significant length of time by bunkering down in some of the most remote and inaccessible locations within The Box.

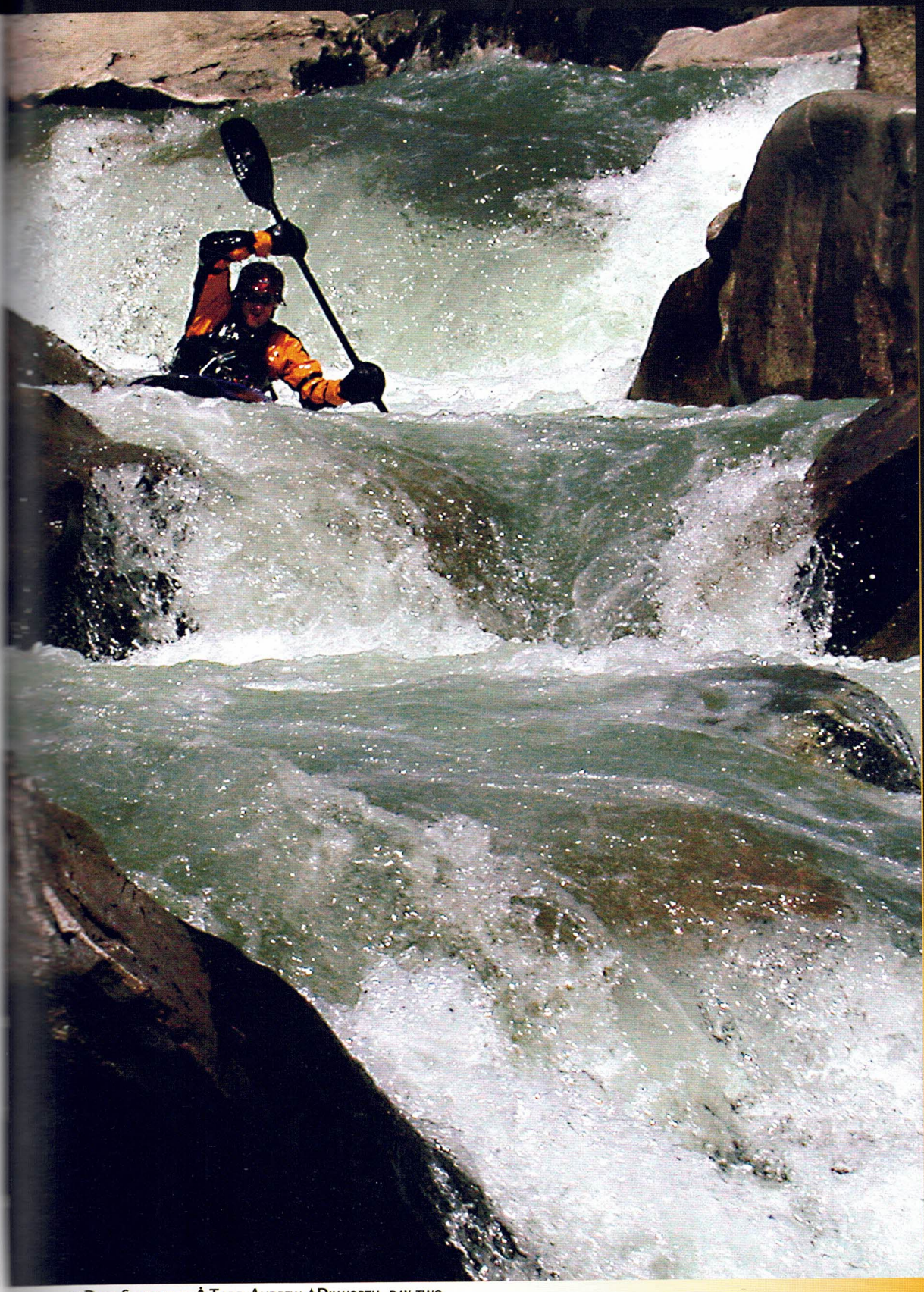
The Nimiipuu fought for the simple right of survival. They called upon their weyakin (guiding spirits) to provide safe passage through a familiar terrain, with an uncertain future looming over the next horizon line. Their attempted flight to Canada was the last of many efforts to avoid the genocide and corralling onto unfamiliar and unproductive reservation lands. Like the fate of nearly all Native Americans, the Nez Perce were finally subjugated to reservation life, but their song of freedom still survives deep within this spectacular canyon. A kayak run through The Box will challenge even the most dedicated of paddlers. When you call upon your weyakin to help guide you through the depths of this gorge, remember the Nez Perce, their struggle and the spirit of freedom that fills the wildlands of the world which must be protected.

The nature of a run down The Box is quite serious and many of the portages are unobvious as to where they begin. A competent guide is highly recommended. The section below Hwy 296 to Crandall Creek is known as the Honeymoon. The Clarks Fork Box is a place for the expert paddler, the Honeymoon is just the warm-up. If you fail to expertly negotiate the Honeymoon stretch, think survival and hike up Crandall Creek to the road. Below Crandall Creek the granite walls rise ominously in the distance. Run Zoom Boom to the Moon and realize that the honeymoon is certainly over as you trudge through the grueling mile-long Green Monster portage on river right. Break halfway through and look into the depths of what would be certain death in kayak, the Green Monster, a breathtakingly beautiful chasm shaped like a natural toilet.

Four miles of open flatwater through an incredibly scenic Yellowstone type valley, ends just beyond a rancher's cable ford. The ranch is set on a bench above the river and is one of the most secluded and picturesque homesteads in the country. I would like to live there. You can dream about it too, as you approach the official entrance to The Box.

A few unfulfilling rapids lead to the Ankle Breaker portage on river left. Once below, with the towering granite walls surrounding you, the commitment of the situation begins to really sink in. Luckily, the whitewater begins in earnest as well. The Snowshoe section will get you back in the groove as you approach a steep section with the first named rapids of The Box. Double Suck is a two-ledge rapid with a gaping undercut and the next horizon line drops over and thunders down through Deep Six. Below Deep Six the gradient really picks up and the classic Balls to the Wall cascades down the river left cliff, a sheer granite slab reaching steeply towards the sky. Balls to the Wall rates as a solid V+, due to a handful of nasty sieves. Scout

A profound incision that is truly deserving of its definitive name. It is the grandest, deepest and most sustained box canyon in the southern Rockies.



Dave Schroeder Todd Andrew Dilworth, day two

and/or portage right, putting in for the mandatory runout of Lower Balls to the Wall.

The last big rapid before the possible car camper's hike-out is Snolieguster, a somewhat long and charging maelstrom of whitewater leading to a serious ledge hole. The sight of the ledge and its consequential recirculation might be enough to have you scrambling to shoulder your boat, but for the brave there is a sweet line culminating with an 8'-boof if you can nail it. Double Dip is the next rapid, and requires a very fine line. Scout carefully, and expect to portage at certain levels.

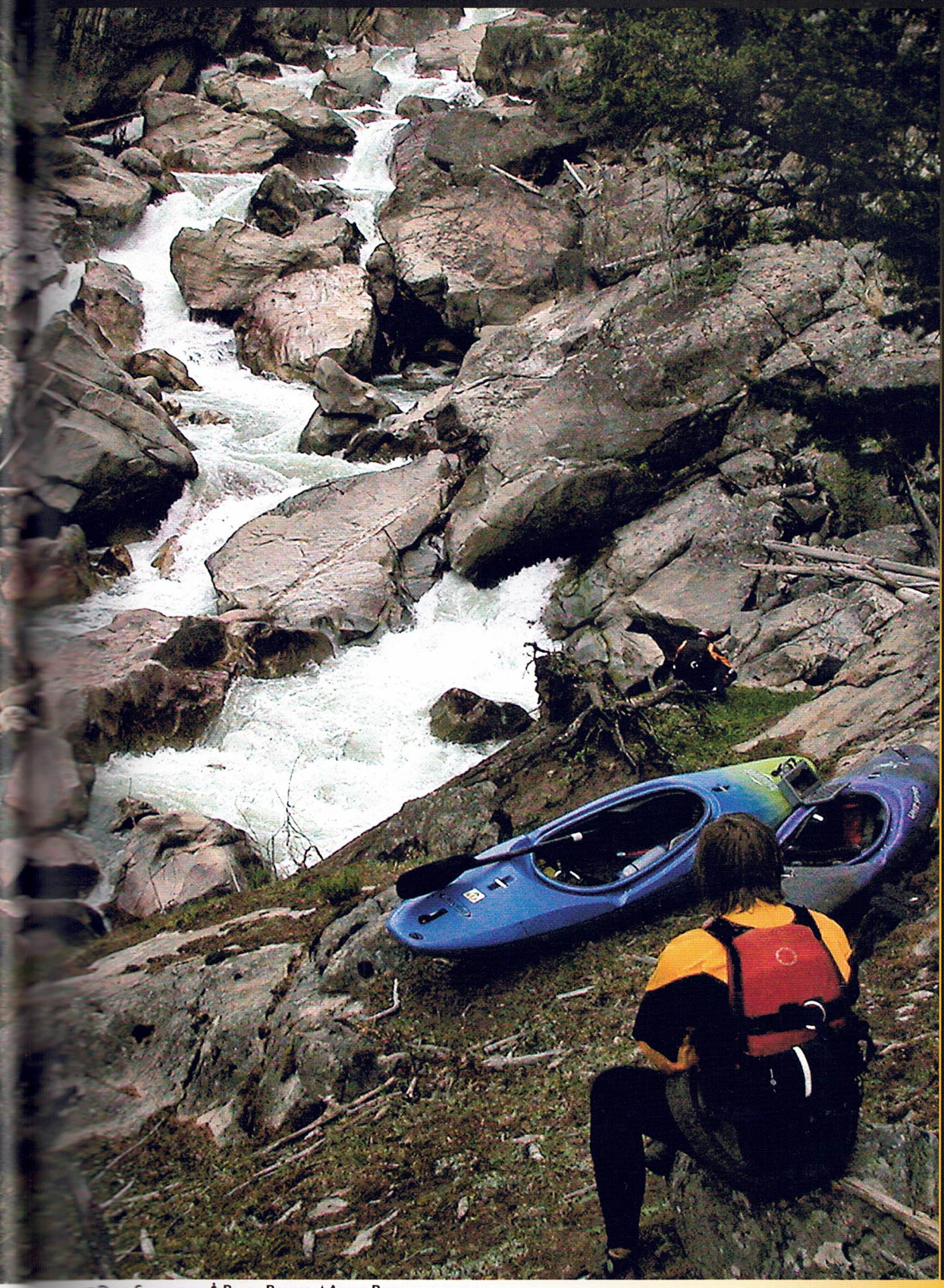
The next especially steep section is the Ballbuster portage on river right and marks the hike-out gully. Paddlers can leave the boats and gear at river-level, and hike out to the luxury of car camping at the rim. Hike down while running shuttle to mark the fisherman's trailhead. Another hike-out route is just beyond this portage, at the approximate halfway point.

There is more big, steep and continuous whitewater below the rim access gullies. I cannot really put into words the imposing beauty in this section of the canyon. It is simply amazing. As you contemplate the heavy lines through Dillworth, the Log Drop and various other incantations of the steep, note the deepening of the canyon and the price of portaging through the chunky scree-lined banks. The river pools eventually and drops through Calendar Falls, a classic and much sought photo-op.

As you approach Deliberation Corner you can sense the canyon walls tightening their grip. Deliberation is a series of back-to-back big moves, a true test of skill for any expedition paddler. In the middle of this series, at the must-run Deliberation corner, the river plunges through a walled in 10' spout river right. This is the first of two infamous mandatory drops in The Box. A scout from the top allows an obscured glimpse of the swirling landing zone and of the easy to catch, but tiny eddy in the distance. The hole here is ugly, largely because it is backed up by an underwater chokestone. Failure to boof may result in a swim—an unpleasant experience as paddlers get sucked through an underwater tunnel.

Below the spout is the last significant drop in the series, the run-out of which is non-portageable and leads to the majestic emerald pools of Dave's Chasm. This is a wall-to-wall gorge with 1,000' cliffs towering into the sky. The most intimate oversized slot canyon narrows I've ever ventured into. Deep and bottomless below you, the reflections off the crisp mountain water can calm a Deliberation shaken paddler or lull the unwary paddler into complacency. Regain or keep your wits here. You're nearly out.

Float in awe to a river-wide sieve or a runnable cave at extremely low water. Portage to seal-slide river left at higher flows. Directly below is another significant, but breathtak-

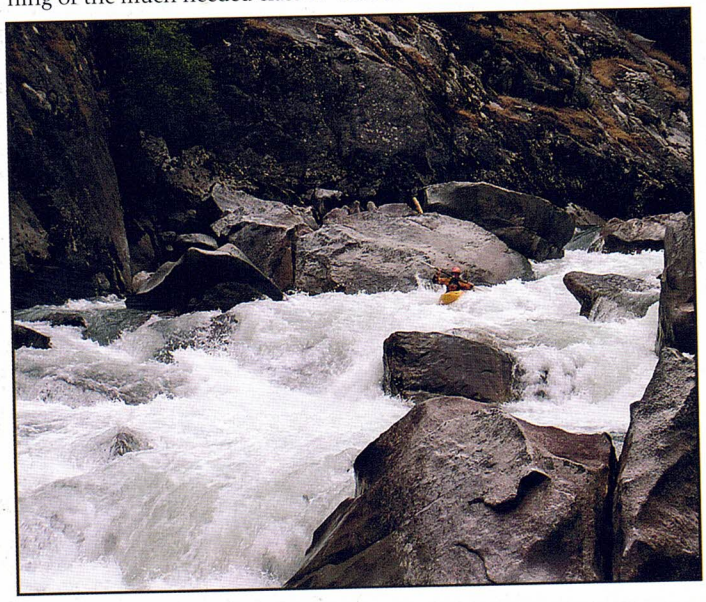


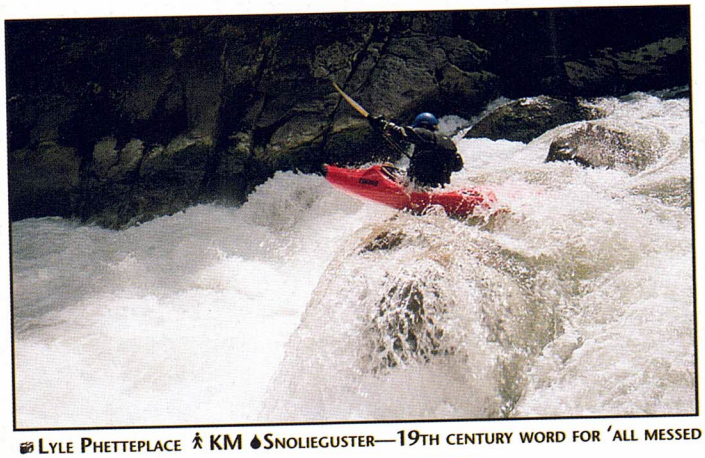
Dave Schroeder Barry Bohrer Ankle Breaker, day one

Drop in with confidence and be ready for some tight and fast moves into a much more open canyon. It's not a bad idea to line-haul a paddler down to the rock at the lip for a quick scout. Sunlight Strainer #2 (Last Gasp) is the final portage. It can be easy to do, but DO NOT eddy hop too far. As with many of the portages within The Box, the point of no return is not obvious. The portage is mandatory and starts immediately after the large pool below Leap of Faith.

At the base of this last portage paddlers arrive in a magical place, where three rivers confluence in an enormous amphitheater. Sunlight Creek cascades into the Clark's Fork down an amazing 100' set of falls as it exits its own mini-box canyon. A few hundred yards away Dead Indian Creek crashes through the granite walls, forcing its way into The Box to become one with the Clarks Fork. You can't help but wonder if this hidden Eden isn't one of the Nez Perce's last hiding places.

Making the pilgrimage to this amazing confluence is a must for any serious wilderness creekboater. One more juicy rapid, Pink Floyd and The Wall, and a couple of unusual black sand beaches signify the beginning of the much needed class IV cool down of the Lower run. Rollick-





Paul Kopacinski. This legendary paddler made the second descent of The Box solo, in the spring, at high water. Heeding beta that ropes would be required to aide in the portaging, he opted to sleep in only his drysuit, saving the rest of the space in his kayak for climbing ropes—which he never used.

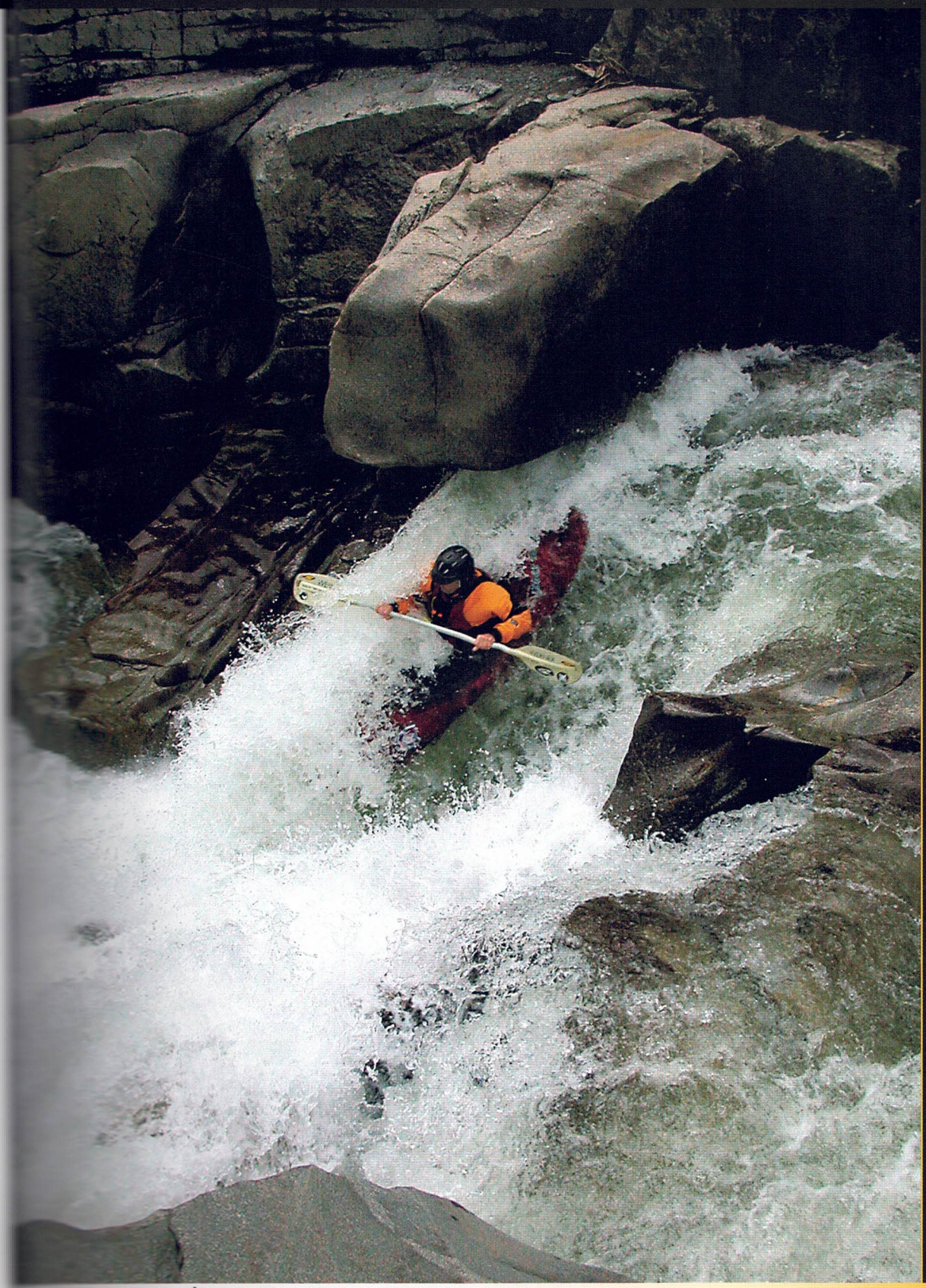
Directions

From Hwy 120 north of Cody, the take-out is found by turning west at the Edelweiss bar/gas station onto Clarks Fork Canyon Rd (Old Hwy 292 & 297). This road goes from paved to dirt, and becomes quite rugged as it continues upstream alongside the river. Before the dirt goes from smooth to seriously bouncy, at what appears to be the final throes of the canyon, there is a steep road down to the river on the left. Take out here.

To get to the put-in go back to Hwy 120 and drive south to the junction with the Chief Joseph Scenic Highway (296). Turn right and take Hwy 296 over Dead Indian Pass and stop to view the scenic vista overlooking the cleft which is The Box. Continue west to where the Chief Joseph Highway crosses the river and put in on the upstream side river left.

To get to the possible car camping spot on the rim, from Dead Indian Pass, follow Hwy 296 north to an unmarked dirt road which is FR 928, a short ways past the bridge over Sunlight Creek and very shortly after passing over another small drainage. The road leads down for a ways and eventually hangs a sweeping left turn along the forested rim. The hike-out below the middle portage is below this turn. The hike-out before the portage is found by following the road north along the rim till it ends and by hiking down from there. If you do not know the terrain, or do not have a guide, some deft route finding is necessary to find the hike-out points. If you don't have a guide, an extra day will be needed to find this road, hike down to the river and mark the day-one stopping point.

LYLE PHETTEPLACE ⛹ KM ♦SNOLIEGUSTER—19TH CENTURY WORD FOR 'ALL MESSED UP'
ES ⛹ PATRICK FORESTER ♦SNOLIEGUSTER RUNOUT BOOF



Dave Schroeder Barry Bohrer Deep Six, day one

9 TO 5 IN THE BOX

By Aaron Pruzan

It was late in July '02 and I had met up with Scott Doherty to paddle and film with Arden, Trask and Loren who were then working with Teton Gravity Research. We spent a day exploring Sunlight Creek with marginal success and were ready for more quality whitewater. The boys wanted footage of The Box from the canyon rim and they wanted the big ones, Balls to the Wall and Deliberation Corner. The only hang up was that Scott and I had only a day to paddle and these rapids are usually run on the first and second days respectively. Then Scott suggested an audacious plan which set the stage for one of the most full-on days of our paddling careers.

We woke up not early enough and while fighting mosquitoes managed to choke down breakfast. Packed with a contingency plan and vague arrangements to meet at Balls, we waved good-bye to my wife and the film crew at the 296 bridge.

9:00 A.M. A late start for an ambitious day of continuous action. We set the tone early, as the numerous rapids of the Honeymoon section, which can provide an afternoon of entertainment, went down in a scant 25 minutes. With few words we trudged through the Green Monster and paddled on down to portage #2. We were now in deep, as the walls of the Box closed and the whitewater cranked up the volume. Fortunately, Doherty had the lines fresh in his head and we charged our way through a myriad of steepness.

1:30 P.M. We made it to Balls but we didn't see Arden anywhere. "Why don't we have a radio?"

"Too late, we're behind schedule. This is a big one, ten seconds after me, let's go." With clean runs we make the big boof at Snolieguster and I was really glad I didn't go into the hole. No energy bars on that day, just sausage and cheese before we shouldered our boats for portage #3. Now we were in the groove, as we careened into another long stretch of intense gnar. "Are we really going to boat scout all of these drops? Wow, I guess so."

3:30 P.M. I couldn't believe it. We were at Deliberation Corner. We looked up at the rim. "Where is Trask?"

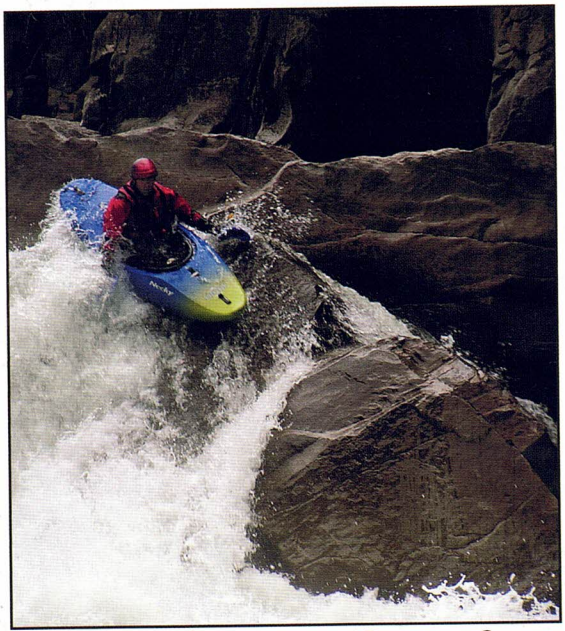
There was no time to wait. "This is it," I thought. "Aesthetic Class V, it doesn't get any better."

"Go ahead, you go first."

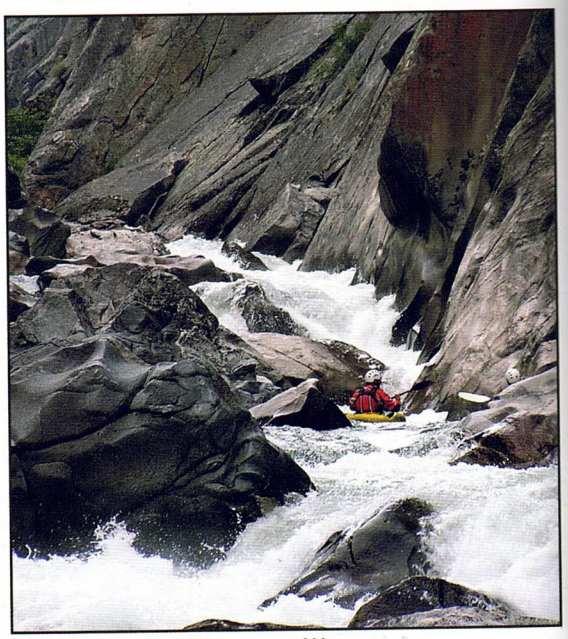
Whew! It's always nice to be downstream of the Corner but we had to keep it rolling. Lower Deliberation, the Gates of Mordor, Portage #4, Leap of Faith, Portage #5, Sunlight... "there's still more?" Oh yeah, this is the Clarks Fork.

5:30 P.M. "Are we really at the take-out? Right on!" There was my wonderful wife, Tamsen, with cold beer and snacks, but where was the film crew? Arden, Trask and Loren pulled up about 20 minutes later. "Sorry, we didn't connect."

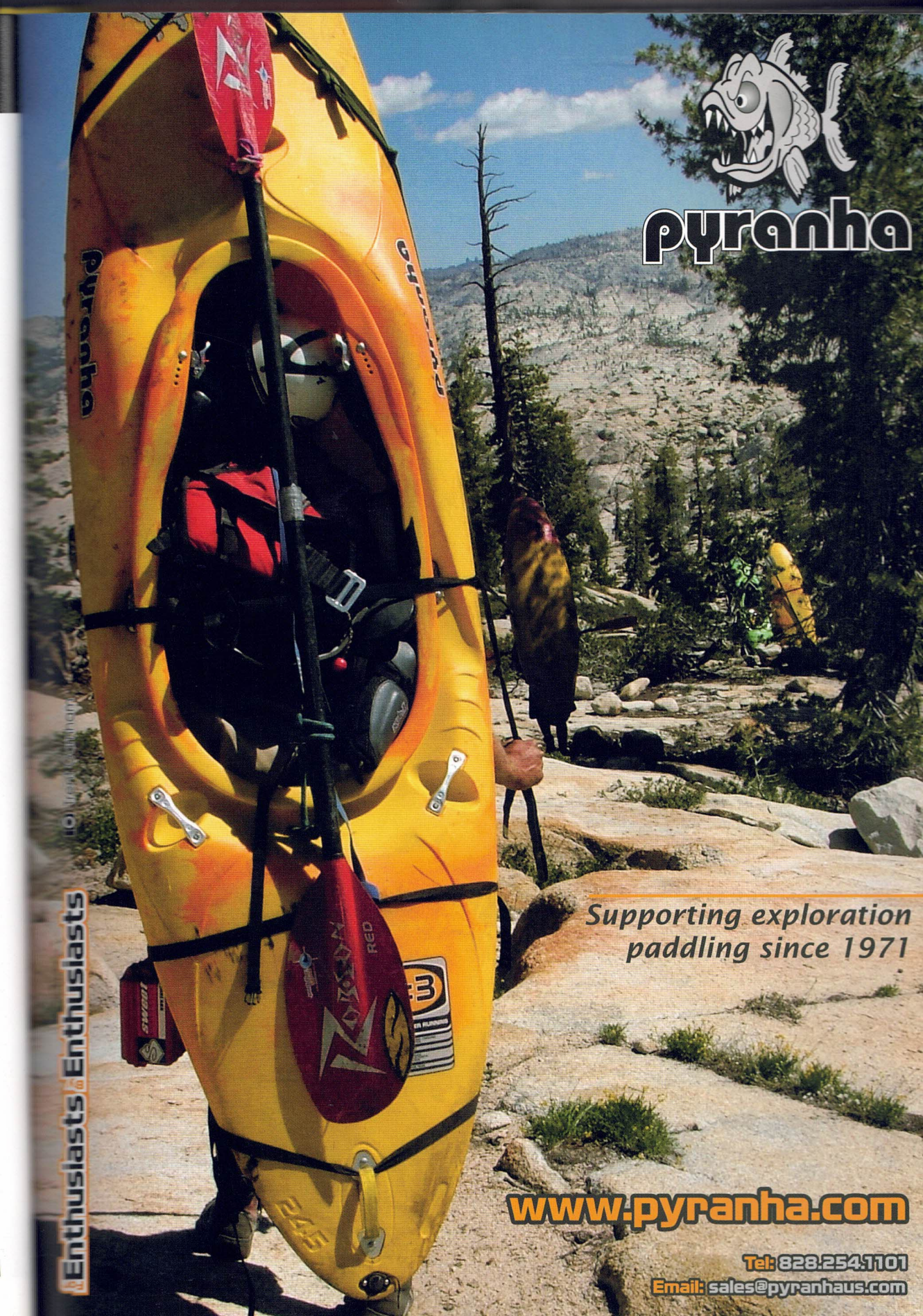
"We got it all–it looked sick. You guys didn't see us?" Scott and I glanced at each other incredulously. "No we didn't. I guess it was all kind of a blur."



Lyle Phetteplace · Dave Schroeder · Deliberation Corner



Lyle Phetteplace · Balls to the Wall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Lower Clarks Fork

The lower is a popular and challenging intermediate run. It is the easiest worthy stretch of whitewater on the Clarks Fork and, to the benefit of paddlers, boasts the longest runnable flow window. As the river exits the granite stratum of The Box and enters the desert limestone, the character turns into a wild and rollicking roller coaster of huge breaking waves and fluffy white goodness. One of the greatest pieces of advice I ever received as a fledgling paddler was essentially this—"If someone tells you a run has big waves, then you're good to go, bring your playboat. If they tell you there's big holes, then get ready for action." This run has huge waves. It's awesome when high and it serves as a good step down from the other runs in the drainage at almost every flow level in the book. Just remember the ever present correlation between the flow level and the difficulty of the run.

Directions: The take-out for the Lower is the same as the take-out for The Box. The put-in is either a three mile hike from the take-out, or a bone jostling ride in a capable and expendable 4WD up Hwy 292 to the top of the rapids or till the roads end at the granite mouth of The Box.

CFS	200<min<600<best 2k<big<8k<really big
Class	IV<1.5k<IV+<4k<V-
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	75 fpm
Length	3 miles
Season	May to August
Gauge	Clarks Fork @ Belfry
Riv Access	Old Hwy 292

Little Rock Creek

As you head into the depths of the Clarks Fork Canyon on your way to the Lower run, you pass some small creeks that crawl across the high desert flats. To think that one of these would be runnable is absurd, but like many secrets of the Beartooths, you must always look further then what the eye perceives. Paddlers have been driving by this creek for many years and it wasn't until 2003 that they discovered its treasure. Heading up this very small valley you're amazed at the size and amount of water coming down, especially in the fall. Finding good flows up high, they realized that by the time the creek hit the main road irrigation had sucked the life out of it.

One of the largest and most remote lakes in the Beartooths, Deep Lake was created by a landslide. On its way to the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River, Little Rock Creek used to flow through a canyon with over hanging walls cut by glaciation. A huge release of energy caused a steep wall to crumble, halting the journey of Littlerock Creek. The landslide created an 800'-high dam. Deep Lake is one mile long and provides ample flow from April to October. Through it's natural release of water from the earth dam, there are two peak flows for Little Rock Creek. Typically there is a peak at runoff, and a second peak in late July when Deep Lake is at it's fullest.

Typically in September and October the creek provides enough water to bounce down and have a good time. At high flows you will want to be on your game and on the lookout for wood.

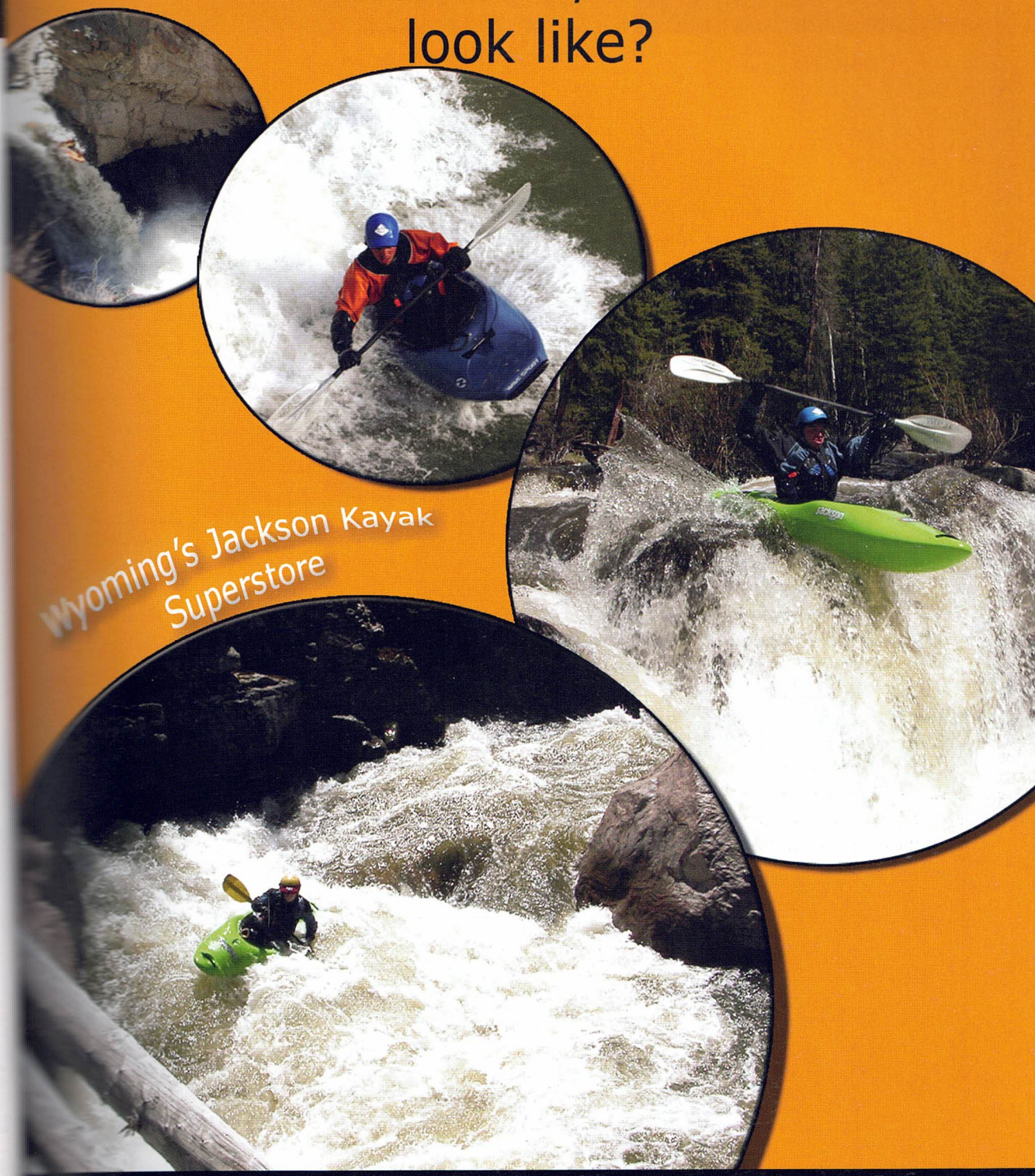
Directions: Drive towards the Lower Clarks Fork but instead of heading all the way into the canyon on the old Hwy 292 (Clarks Fork Canyon Rd). Take a right on Rd 8RA and then follow FR 121 to the put-in. As you make your way towards the creek there is a ranch at the end of the good road. From here on it is recommended to have 4WD or park past the ranch and hike to the put-in at the end of the dirt road. You can hike upstream to scout a longer run.

Look for a diversion that steals a lot of the water just before you cross a bridge on the way to the put-in. Take out just downstream of this diversion on Rd 8RA.

-Aaron Mulkey

CFS	65<optimal<130
Class	III+<120<IV
Quality	★★★
Gradient	170 fpm
Length	1 mile
Season	May to October
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Deep Lake
Take-out	Rd 8RA

If fun were visible, what would it look like?



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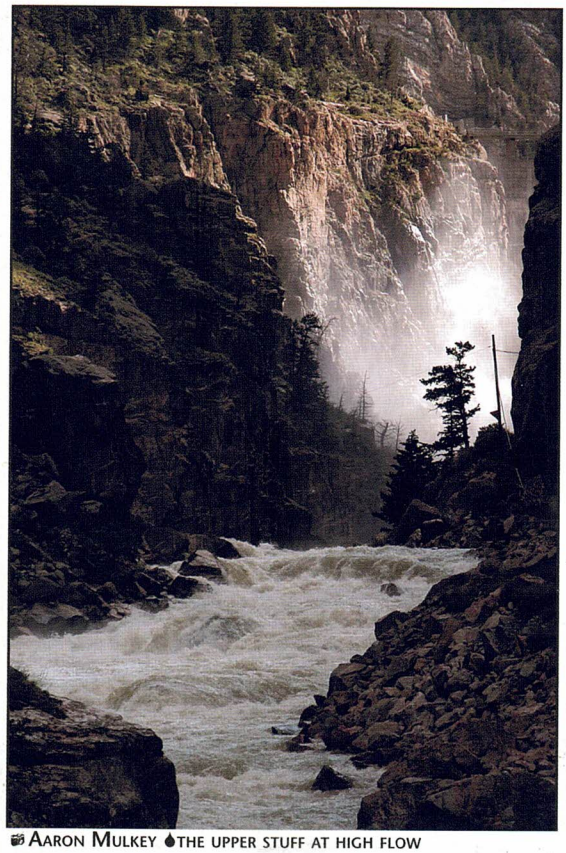
Instruction Sales Rentals

Shoshone River

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	400	800	1100	2000
Character	soy milk	moo juice	usual dam release	freestyle road trip
Proper Class	IV-	IV-	IV (IV+ x4)	IV+ (V- x4)
Lower Class	not running	II+	III-	III+
Proper Quality	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Lower Quality	not running	★★	★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	55 fpm, 115 fpm action Shoshone, 30 fpm Lower			
Remoteness	roadside, but somewhat committing			
Hitchability	fair			
Length	3.6 miles Shoshone, 13 miles Lower (variable)			
Season	year round, but medium from mid April to mid October			
Gauge	Shoshone River near Buffalo Bill Reservoir, WY			
Put-in	Hwy 120 culvert or Red Canyon river access			
Take-out	Red Canyon river access or Hwy 14 bridge			

Cody's wild-west hospitality will keep the river-rats entertained and well-fed, with places like the Silver Dollar Bar and The Beta coffee house. Bison Willys Hostel offers lodging on a budget and is paddler friendly—convenient since many paddling trips on the nearby Clarks Fork start and end in Cody. Five minutes from downtown is the class II-to-IV dam-release whitewater of the Shoshone, with freestyle-friendly flows from April 15th to October 15th. The local hospitality is excellent with a number of sick ice climbers welcoming the whitewater crowd. Core Mountain Sports (which carries kayaks) is the best place to rendezvous with the local whitewater crew, and to squeeze some après-kayak bouldering into the weekend activities.



AARON MULKEY ♦THE UPPER STUFF AT HIGH FLOW

Shoshone

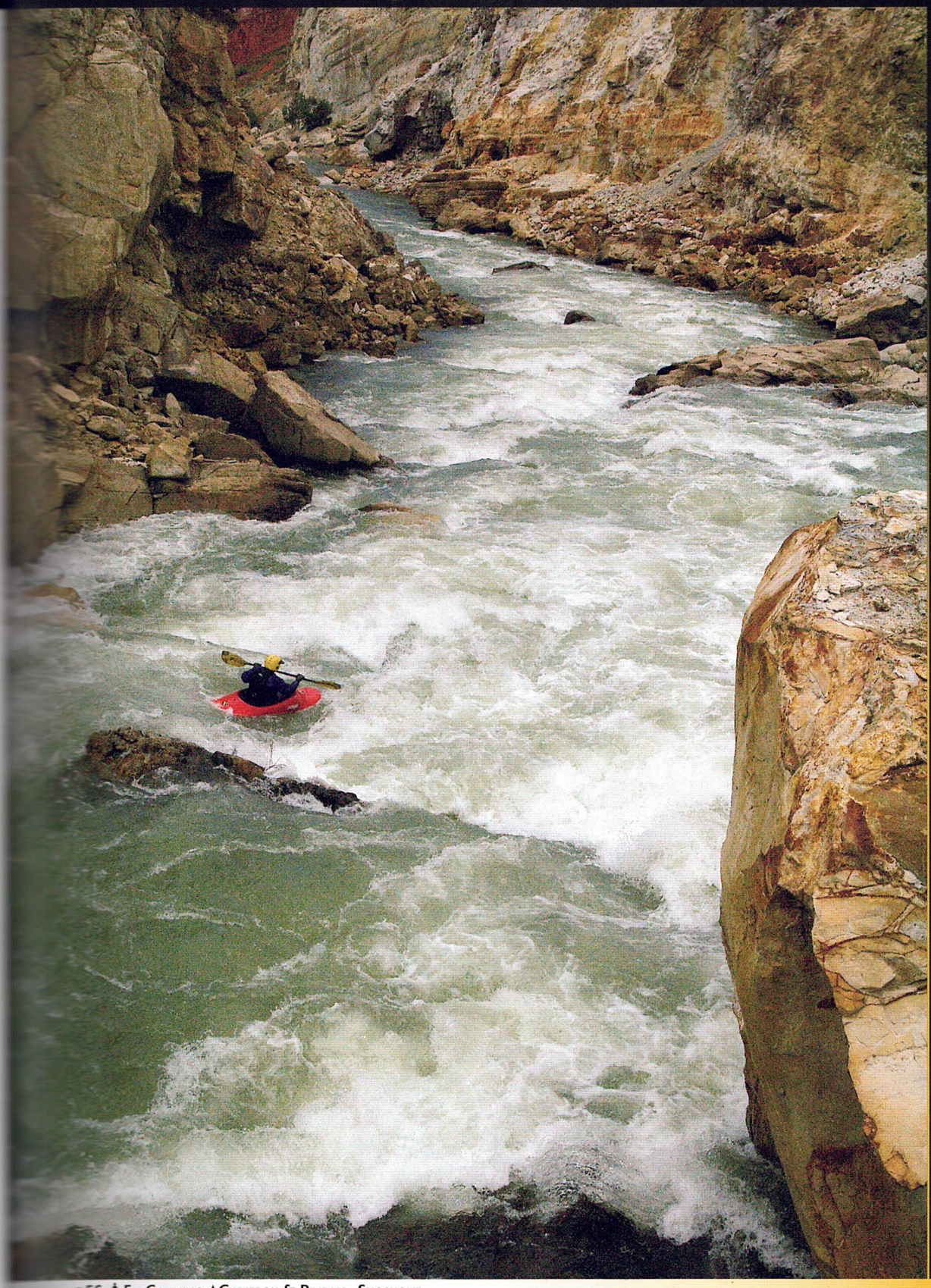
The Shoshone River has been a local secret for years. Dam released flows of 1100 cfs are common and keep the freestyle action good in the shoulder seasons. At high flows the run becomes big water IV+ with a few class V drops that demand respect. A few access points can deliver paddlers into different parts of the action, but the roadside run is usually pretty deep in the canyon, and occasionally walled.

The run starts with a ½-mile pool-drop section, below a river-wide sieve at the base of the dam. There is usually only 100-150 cfs in this hike-to section, but the creek-style drops can still be run in a playboat. Paddlers may opt to put in just below this for the less challenging action. At high-flow few will venture into the top section.

The power plant water boils the entire river as it adds the majority of the flow to the Shoshone. A short class III drop, S-turn, comes quickly below the dam and offers a taste of the river's power. Some excellent on-the-fly play dots the next two miles of river. Passing under the third bridge marks the last ½ mile of warm-up, and the start of the main action.

The first drop after Hayden Bridge is Entrance Exam. Here most of the flow piles into an overhanging limestone cliff and underwater sieve, demanding a right line. Quickly after Entrance Exam is Customs, a river-wide ledge-drop that is best run with a center boof. The run-out leads into

Freestyle friendly flows from April 15th to October 15th
and wild west hospitality welcome paddlers to Cody.

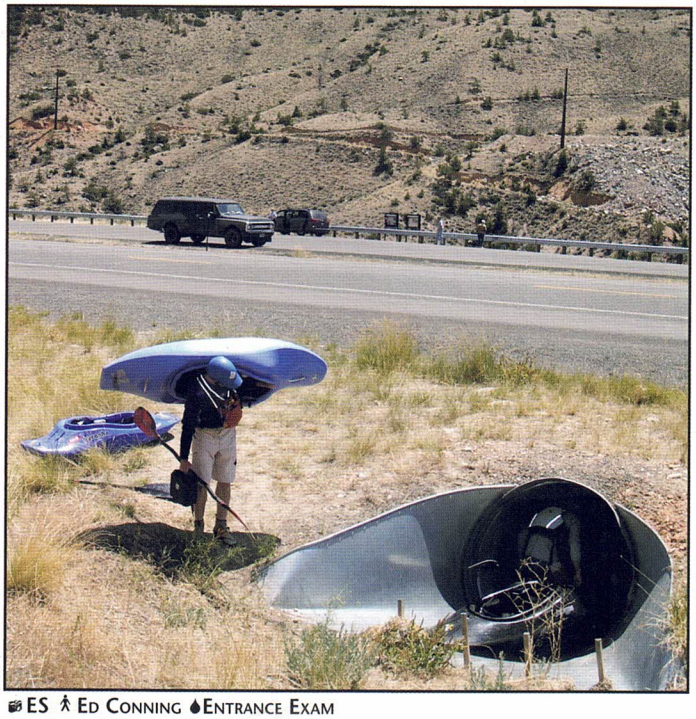


Clarks Fork • Shoshone River

ES Ed Conning ♦Gameboy & Pinball, Shoshone

the constricted Iron Curtain. Those feeling lucky can enjoy the cliff jumping downtime into the powerful eddy-line—but do so at your own risk. Just before the next bridge and the lower power plant is the Silver Tube play-hole, which offers surfing and cartwheeling with eddy service. Use the river left hot spring pool to warm the hands or take a soak.

The second half of the limestone gorge is especially pretty, and contains very good whitewater action. X-box is the next drop, and demands a scout since it becomes a sieve at low flow. Nintendo boulder-drop follows with multiple clean lines. Large house-size rocks on river right provide a scout of Gameboy and Pinball rapids, though the expert will be able to read-and-run this practically single rapid. Don't underestimate this limestone finale, which has been constantly changing over the last few years. A few more bends, and beginner surfing at the second hot springs (private) remain before the Red Canyon take-out.



Lower Shoshone

The best beginner paddling of the area begins at the Red Canyon river access. A sun-soaked seven or thirteen miles of class III- whitewater winds to the north of Cody through the arid Wyoming plains. At high water the first mile of the lower run offers some of the best play boating in Wyoming, with six to eight foot standing waves.

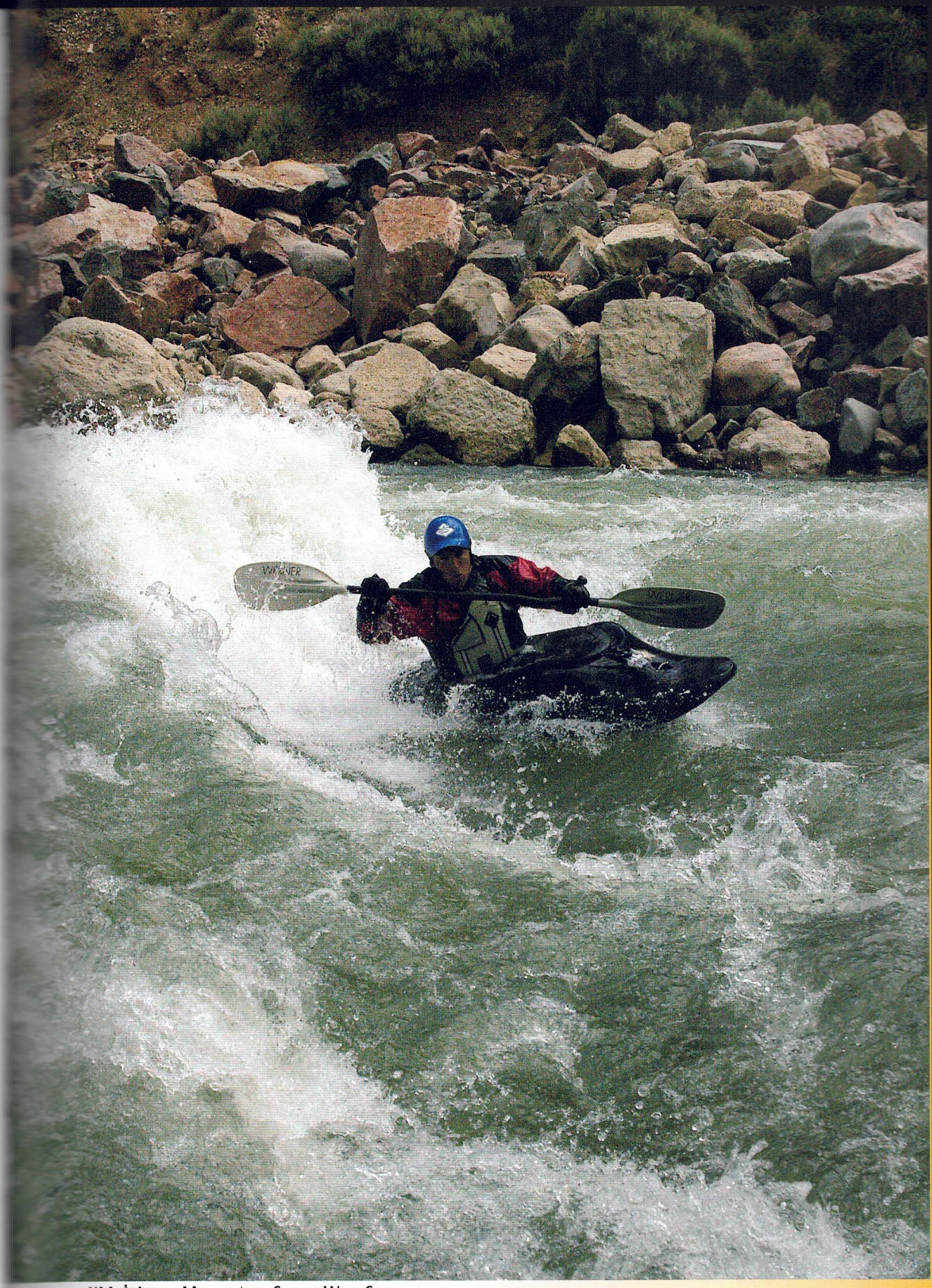
-Aaron Mulkey

Directions

To get to the take-out for the Shoshone run, take Hwy 120 to the west side of Cody, and turn north onto Demaris Street. Veer left to the parking area at the end of the road, at the Red Canyon river access. To get to the Shoshone put-in, drive exactly 3.3 miles west on Hwy 20 and park in the left pullout. Partially gear up with pfd and helmet (body protection). Pack the rest of your gear in your boat, and hike across the road and away from the river. Hike through the metal culvert (if it isn't raining), which leads to a dam road. Hike upstream to the uppermost put-in.

To access the Lower run, put in at Red Canyon river access, and take out at either Hwy 120 or Hwy 14 to the northeast of Cody.

ES 🚶 Ed Conning 💧Entrance Exam
KM 🚶 ES & Aaron 💧the culvert hike



Clarks Fork • Shoshone River

KM Aaron Mulkey the Square Wave Set

South Fork Creeks

The South Fork Valley is the gateway to some of the most remote country in the continental U.S. and is home to the highest concentration of grizzly bears in North America. Be sure to make plenty of noise while hiking, and always be looking over your shoulder. This stunning valley is also host to some of the highest concentrations of ice falls in the lower 48 states. It is recognized as a destination and proving ground for aspiring ice climbers and alpinists. As would be expected, the ice falls reside in a handful of very steep and committing creeks that crash down canyons so narrow that you may mistake this for a canyoneering trip rather than a kayaking trip.

The South Fork Creeks were first discovered in 2003 when Aaron Mulkey, a distinguished local ice climber, guidebook author and owner of Core Mountain Sports, rallied a few friends to join him on the first descent of Deer Creek.

There's free camping at the Deer Creek Campground, and the valley's rugged terrain provides boaters with a true wilderness experience. An experience that should be approached with ropes, ample time, and nerves of steel.

Todd Gillman ⛹ Evan Ross & Shane Robinson ♦Cabin Creek hike-in

Deer Creek (no beta box)

One of the most committing class V runs in the region and one of the hardest to catch at an optimal level. Crossing over the bridge at the campground, one can look upstream and visualize the power and volume that can consume the creek during high runoff years. The run is so close to it's source that the levels fluctuate dramatically during the day.

The run consists of small waterfalls, slides and steep boulder drops down a very tight gorge with 400' walls that rise out of the water. With the levels fluctuating throughout the day, getting a visual of the flows at the bridge the morning before you put on is key. Levels at the bridge should be just enough to float. If you have time, scout the lower half of the run by hiking upstream. Leave ample time for scouting this gorge, since it's a pain in the ass.

Directions: From Cody take Hwy 291 southwest to the Deer Creek trailhead. This is the take-out, and trailhead. The trail quickly rises and switchbacks up over the parking lot and begins to traverse the mountain. After about two miles you will cross the first small creek, which drops into a 120 foot falls below the trail. Where it confluences with the main Deer Creek will be your put-in.

Continue upstream and descend down the ridge just before the trail begins to switchback up to your right. Look for a semi-steep chimney that descends into the small creek on your left. Lowering your boats will require a long rope, but sometimes there is one fixed. Bring your own rope to aid in safe passage through the canyon.

Cabin Creek (no beta box)

Cabin Creek hides in the top of the South Fork Valley. The creek plunges through one of the most inaccessible gorges in all of the Southern Rockies. Walled off by cliffs, the upper waterfalls have proven to be highly inaccessible. As of 2006, only the bottom hike-and-huck 25' waterfall has been run, and the manky 3/4 mile runout back to the trailhead parking lot.

The airtime is fantastic on this picturesque falls but access is not. Expect some time spent scrambling around scree slopes on river right. The first 150 feet leads to a clump of trees to rope the boats up to, then more creative scrambling over a ridge. A fixed rope aids in the descent to the river, and put in above the lip.

Directions: Cabin Creek lies at the western end of Hwy 291, 36 miles from Cody. Hike upstream for about 3/4 miles to where the walls narrow and Cabin Creek Falls awaits.

Main South Fork Shoshone (no beta box)

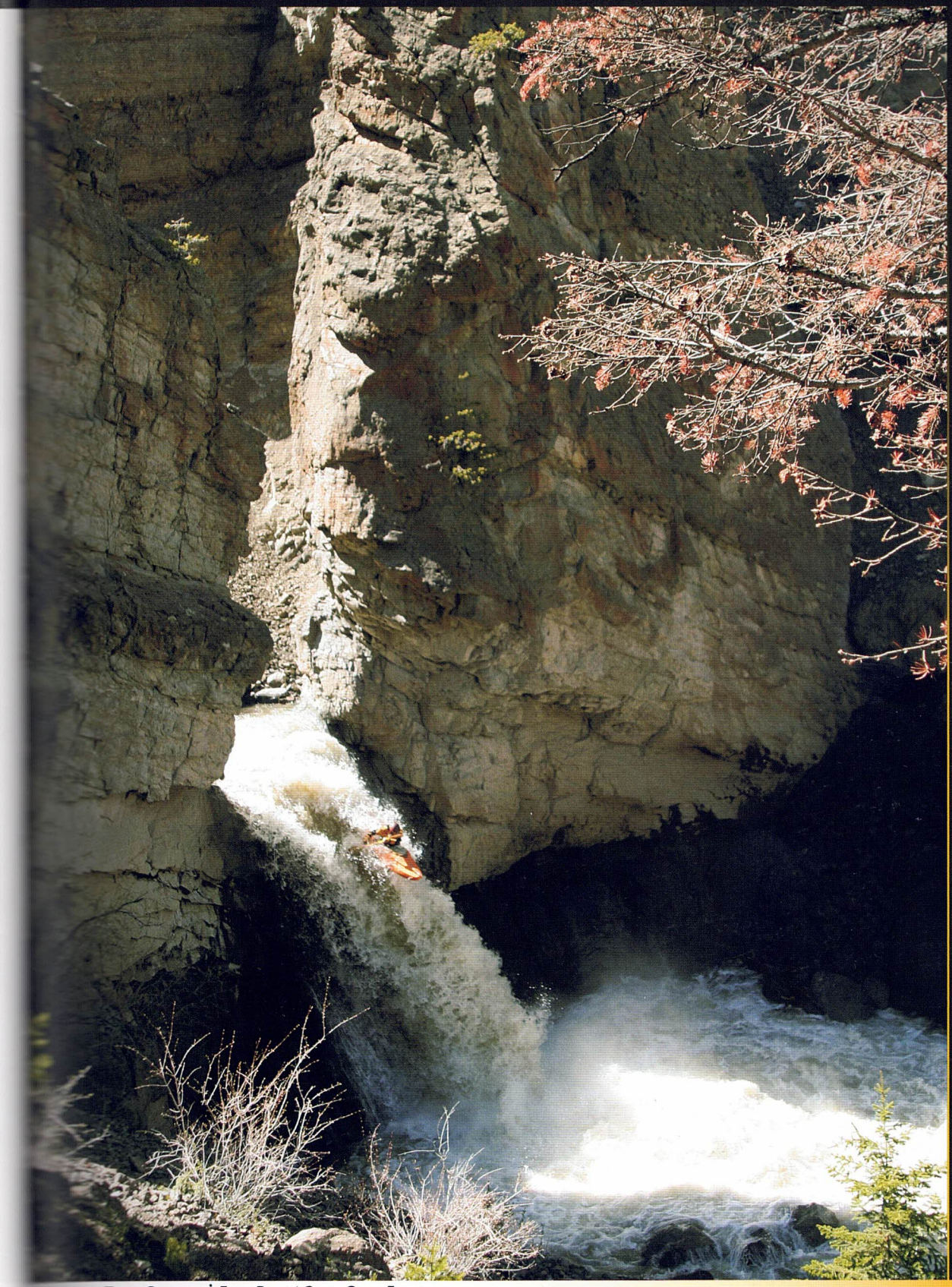
If you're willing to hike, you'll be rewarded with a relatively easy run with stunning scenery. At high water there is one class IV drop and a lot of class II-III whitewater with good play in a fun box canyon.

Hike-in Instructions: From the Upper South Fork trailhead cross Cabin Creek and find a good trail on the other side that will lead you around the Majo Ranch and back down to the South Fork river. Cross the river a second time and take the Main South Fork trail. Hike upstream two miles. The trail gradually climbs to the rim of the canyon. As the box canyon begins to end and the meadows above the canyon come into view, the trail splits. Take the right split that will drop into the valley or put in higher by continuing on the main trail. Don't continue to Needle Creek—it's been explored.

Directions: Take Hwy 291 west of Cody to the Upper South Fork trailhead, at the same access point as Cabin Creek. Take out at the Hwy 291 bridge.

-Aaron Mulkey (all)

The South Fork Valley is the gateway to some of the most remote country in the continental US and is home to the highest concentration of Grizzly Bears in North America.



Todd Gillman Evan Ross Cabin Creek Falls

Crystal Drainage

JARED JOHNSON SHILO ROBINSON BOTTOM DROP, DEVILS PUNCHBOWL

Carbondale Town

The Crystal River is short as far as named rivers go in Colorado. Dropping into the Roaring Fork the waters change names briefly before becoming one with the Colorado River. It's here that the growing berg of Carbondale rests, a town squeezed in by soaring real estate prices up-valley towards Aspen, and the less-posh Glenwood Springs. The main drag has slowly gentrified into what it is today—a bustling block of mountain-town commerce, wood-darkened bars, Mexican fare and pizza for the après kayak. For the early birds, the Village Smithy serves up some of the best breakfast food to prepare for a river day, and my crazy aunt is sure to be yelling across the room at you and the other "dirt-bag kayakers."

Carbondale couldn't let Glenwood get the only whitewater park. Plans are in the works for a new whitewater park on the Roaring Fork, increasing its reputation as a true destination kayaking town. By the time you are reading this, the park will hopefully reside under the Hwy 133 bridge in town.

Avalanche Down

Two sections divide the class III waters of the Crystal downstream of Avalanche Creek, as the river winds its way through its last miles before becoming one with the Roaring Fork at the edge of Carbondale.

The most popular easy run on the Crystal comes at the last five miles of the Crystal River canyon. Starting at Avalanche Creek and paddling to BRB campground paddlers are rewarded with top-notch afternoon scenery. Although a little rough for paddlers without a roll, boaters of class III ability will find a rewarding stretch of whitewater that opens up a short ways above the take-out. A few islands and wave trains spice up the mellow action just enough to stoke the beginner.

Putting in at the BRB campround starts the trip off as an even mellower cruise. The river S-turns through the edge of the much wider Roaring Fork Valley, and paddlers can catch a glimpse of the impressive Mt. Sopris. There are a few non-threatening rapids in this stretch. The most notable feature of the run is the Colorado Rocky Mountain School (CRMS) slalom course, so don't be surprised to get schooled by a 14 year old in a slalom boat.

Directions: The lowest take-out is at the CRMS bridge (108 Rd), just above the confluence with the Roaring Fork. Multiple access points exist throughout the lower run. The half-way point is the BRB CG, near mm 62 off Hwy 133. Continue south on Hwy 133 to the Avalanche Creek bridge, and uppermost put-in, near mm 57.

CFS	500<min<700<best
Class	III
Quality	★★★
Gradient	60 fpm
Length	12 miles (variable)
Season	May to August
Gauge	Crystal abv Avalanche
Put-in	Avalanche Crk
Take-out	108 Rd bridge

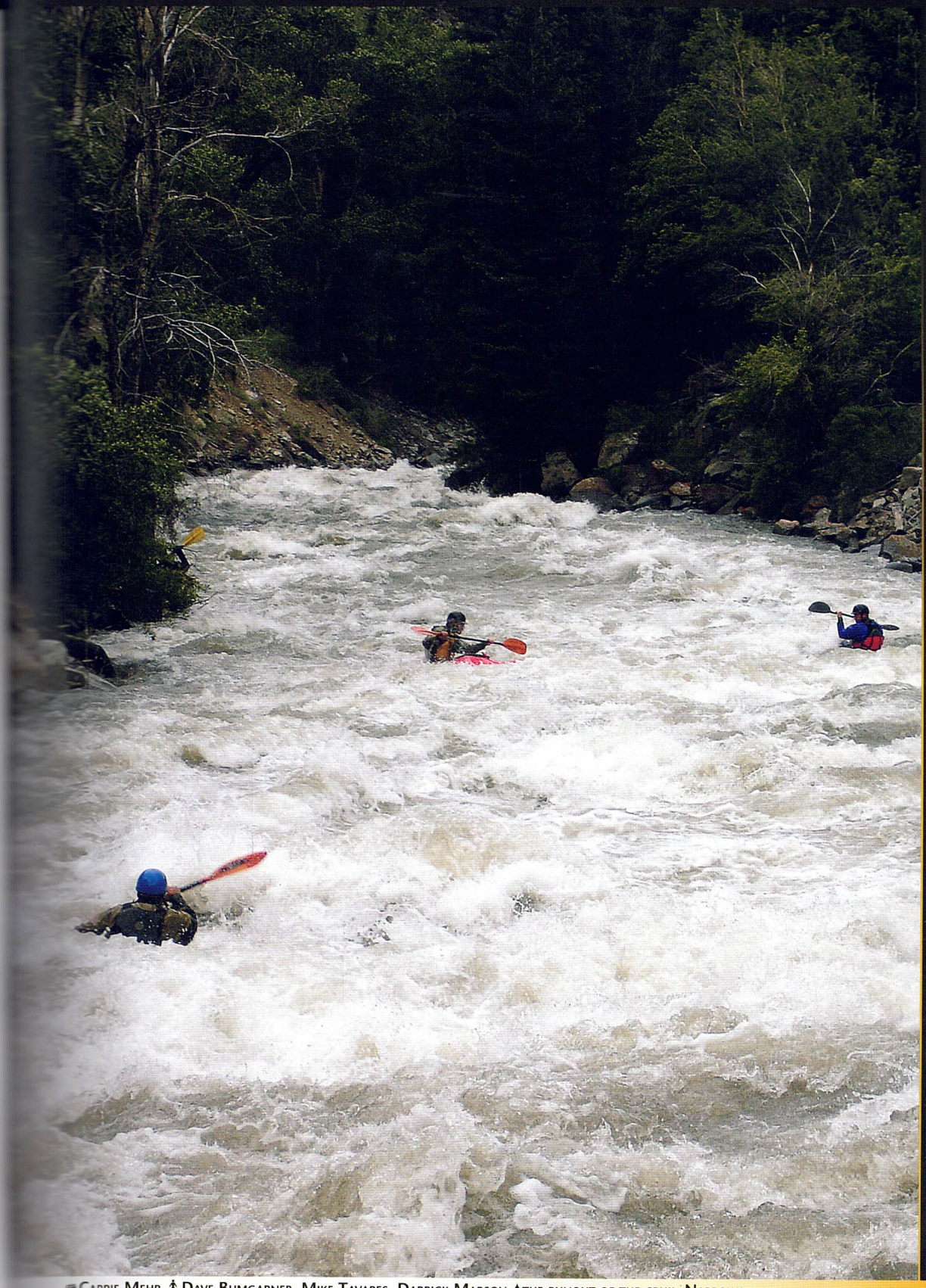
Catherine Store Section, Roaring Fork

This four-mile run on the Roaring Fork flows right into Carbondale and will end at the play-park when it is hopefully completed over the coming years. Halfway down is the best play feature of the run, the Catherine Store Hole. Numerous man-made fishing weirs, that make excellent play features, dot the course of this class II run making it a great beginner freestyle learning ground. If you run into the Colorado Rocky Mountain School Kayak Oysters you will be jealous that you didn't go there for high school as you watch the young pupils throw down. Don't take it too hard. Ali Wade, three time US Freestyle Team member, figuratively owns this hole, and literally the adjoining property.

Directions: Take out at the Hwy 133 bridge in Carbondale. The put-in is at the 100 Rd bridge, south off of Hwy 82.

CFS	800<optimal
Class	II+
Quality	★★★★ (freestyle)
Gradient	20 fpm
Length	4 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	RF @ Emma
Put-in	100 Rd bridge
Take-out	Hwy 133 bridge

ES CANYON SCENERY



Carrie Mehr 🚶 Dave Bumgarner, Mike Tavares, Darrick Marson 💧 the runout of the crux, Narrows

Narrows & Meatgrinder

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	350	500	800	1100
Character	Narrows only	Meat minimum	Meaty	Grinding
Narrows Class	IV	IV+	IV+	V
Meat Class	not running	V+	V+	NR
Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	100 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good			
Length	2 miles each			
Season	May to July			
Gauge	Crystal above Avalanche Creek			
Put-in	Redstone North Entrance or Penny Hot Springs			
Take-out	Penny Hot Springs or Avalanche Creek			

Perhaps the real shame of the lower Crystal River sections is that they will always pale in comparison to the stunning upper reaches of the river, despite being beautiful themselves as the river snakes its way alongside Hwy 133 to the south of Carbondale. Blast rock is present, so the major risk here is taking a rock to the head in the swift moving and shallow current. Fortunately, higher water tends to pad things nicely, making the Narrows a preferred afternoon quickie. Lower flows are the cause of a less interesting run, but Meatgrinder comes into its prime as park-and-paddle gnar at these levels. This is the afternoon retreat for the numerous legendary creekboaters of the lower Roaring Fork Valley. And yes, the water is as clear as Crystals, unless utilizing a rain fed flow for an off-season session.

Narrows

This is more of a single rapid then an actual run, but paddling the mellower water before and after the Narrows makes it more of a worthwhile section, especially at higher flows. At lower flows this is a good IV+, and great roadside run to drag the boyfriend along for his first pushy-water experience. A river-wide hole forms towards the top of the drop at these levels, but is generally flushy and easy to punch through regardless of the chosen line. At lower flows the undercut on river right will be of the most concern. At high flows this is a mini-sampling of the NF Payette big water style paddling, although the depressingly short length keeps the quality a far cry below the Idaho dreamland. When things get over 1500, the water sucks out so hard in the trough of the second wave that if you boof the first too hard, a pancake onto the river bottom is likely. Combine this run with Glenwood Canyon's Barrel Springs to experience a Colorado big water weekend.

Meatgrinder

This is a burly rapid, and it's fairly uncommon to see a group here. This is partially due to the ideal levels of Meatgrinder, which are generally on the high side during North Fork season, and on the low side for Crystal Gorge season. For groups who just spent a weekend running the various stretches of the Upper Crystal, motivation is typically lacking. Especially by the time the posse stops roadside at the Meat on Sunday afternoon, with an empty stomach and a long drive still ahead. Thus, its usually completed by locals, and merely scouted by passers-by.

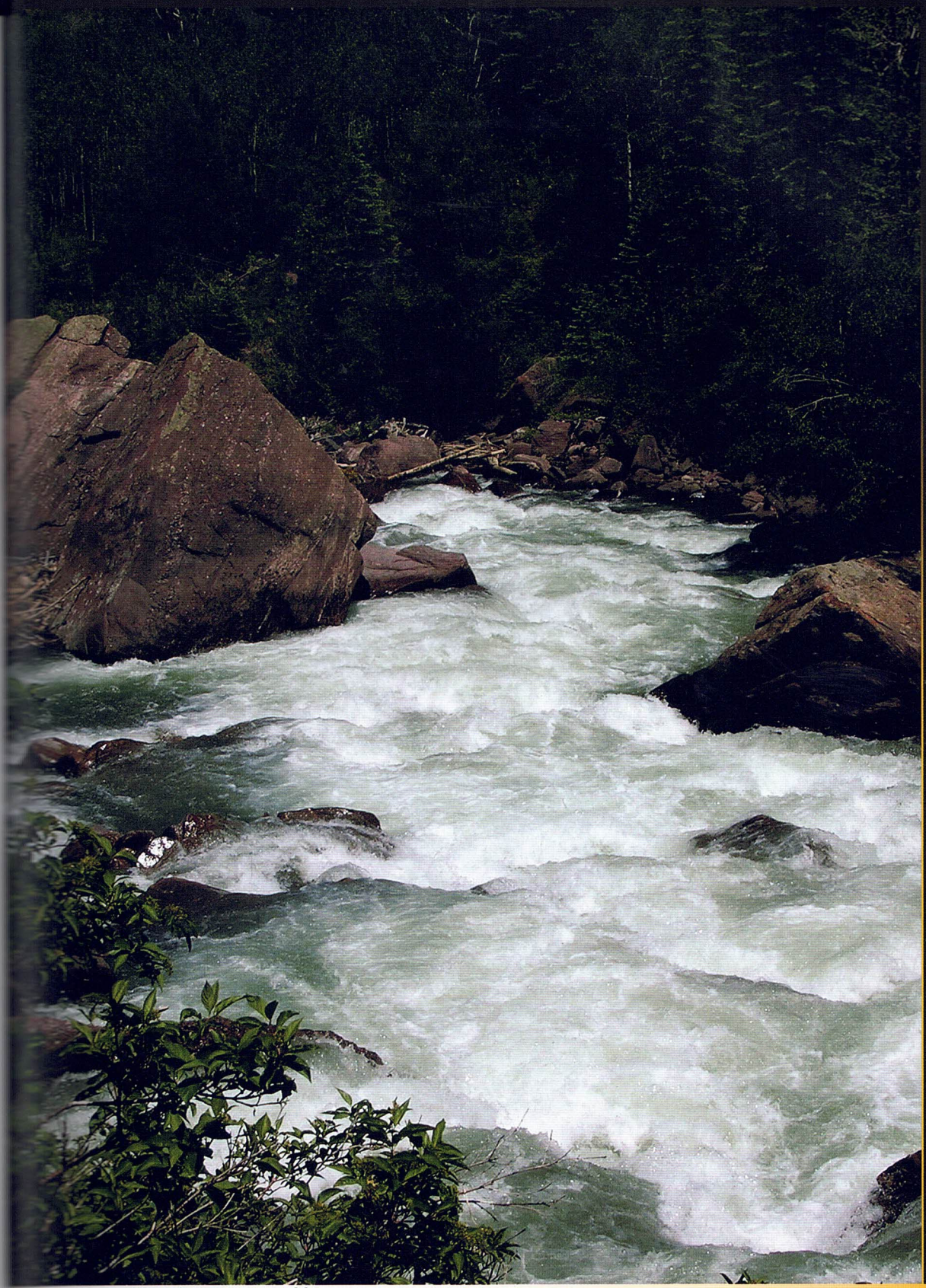
A center line at the top is the typical go-to line, where delicate balance will be necessary to stay on line for the next two corners—which form the crux of the drop. Wood collects in the multiple channels often, so a scout will be mandatory prior to every descent. Numerous lines exist, so choose the route that will keep you and your boat upright and off the sharp rocks—ideally the meat of the Meat.

If the level is high then it can be a nice treat to put-in on the runout of Meatgrinder. A half-step harder than the Narrows, it's the perfect jumpstart for some bigger water paddling. Last time we had to seal launch down the shore to have enough speed to get past the eddy line, and out into the immediately big wave train.

Directions

Take out downstream of Redstone on Hwy 133 mm 57, just below the Avalanche Creek Bridge on river left. Two miles up is the official Narrows put-in, and Penny Hot Springs. Meatgrinder is almost always run in combination with the Narrows. For the gnar option, pull over at the three story tall rock separating the rapid and the road, a ¼ mile down from the north entrance to Redstone, near mm 53 (more legal/safe put-in).

Combined with good Barrel Springs flows, the G-Wood area contains some acceptable big water options in the spring.



Bogan Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	400	500	800	1200
Character	scrape	float	pushy current	few eddies
Bogan Class	III+	IV-	IV-	IV
Lower Class	III (NR)	III (NR)	III+ (NR)	IV- (NR)
Bogan Quality	★★	★★	★★★	★★★
Lower Quality	★	★★	★★	★★
Gradient	80 fpm Canyon, 50 fpm Lower			
Remoteness	mostly roadside, never committing			
Hitchability	good for lower, fair for Bogan Canyon			
Length	11 miles (4.6 miles Marble to Bogan Flats CG, 6.4 miles Bogan Flats CG to Redstone)			
Season	May to July			
Gauge	Crystal River above Avalanche Creek			
Put-in	Marble, FR 314 bridge or Bogan Flats CG			
Take-out	Bogan Flats CG, Hwy 133, or Redstone			

Bogan Canyon is the gateway to the Marble area. It's a place that divides the more manageable sections of whitewater on the lower Crystal River with the expert destinations above Beaver Lake. Traveling upriver on FR 314 is a bumpy experience, filled with anticipation, and often fatigue as paddlers complete the last few miles of a late night drive to Beaver Lake. The gravel parking lot is one of the more invigorating rendezvous sites in this book. A daylight drive through the one-stop-sign town of Marble stirs the imagination of what the place used to look like when it reached its peak population of 1400 people before WWI. Ninety years later Marble is one of the few towns that still lacks a public water and sewage system—although this could be a good thing, since most of downtown rests on a mudflat. The number one industry is the continuous mining at the Marble Quarry on Yule Creek. It's hard to believe that even the raw chunks of scattered marble are worth $1.00 a pound (a cubic foot weighs 170 lbs). The only other moneymakers of the area are the prime real estate and light tourism. As the host town to three of the best expert runs in the state, and the Bogan Canyon easy intermediate stretch nearby for the kid, I'm ready to buy-in on the local real estate.

Bogan Canyon

This is the top and more secluded section of whitewater between Marble and Redstone. Running parallel to FR 314, the river rarely meets the road as it courses through the impressive valley. Paddlers that put-in at the Quarry Road Bridge in Marble will enjoy the view of one highly impressive waterfall that pours off the left cliff wall, prompting imagination of what lies above. The whitewater in here is of little concern, but expect marble debris in the river—and keep your kayak off of the abrasive sides of the rock.

ES ♦Beaver Lake, Marble

The more standard put-in is at the FR 314 bridge, about halfway between Hwy 133 and Marble. It's conveniently located at the best shop to settle the Ice Cream tab. Below the bridge a constant amount of deadfall in the stream demands class IV- maneuvering skills for safe passage. Heads-up aspiring intermediates will find manageable action in a scenic setting. Dress warm for any of the Crystal River sections, and bring a pin kit. This is the best section for paddlers that have the skills.

Lower Bogan

Although still scenic, the Crystal River shares the canyon with Hwy 133 throughout this stretch, providing easy roadside access to the predominately class III whitewater. It's not as pristine as Bogan Canyon, but it's a pleasant float that suddenly narrows between a cliff wall and a road, where a couple relatively difficult rapids exist. It's advisable to pre-scout the whitewater here, and the dangerous Hwy 133 bridge culverts—a likely portage. Take-out anywhere along Hwy 133 or in the town of Redstone, above the class V+ Meatgrinder.

Directions

The take-out to the lower is in Redstone, or anywhere along Hwy 133. Drive south on Hwy 133, and turn left onto FR 314 (before the McClure pass switchbacks). Less than a mile up FR 314 turn left into the put-in at Bogan Flats CG. Put-in at the FR 314 bridge for the crux of Bogan Canyon, or in Marble for a longer run.

LÄRABAR®
THE ORIGINAL FRUIT & NUT FOOD BAR™
Yule Creek Photo by Mark Olson

Yule Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Gauge CFS	400	500	1000	1600
Character	huge	still huge	balls of steel	air sickness bag
Class	V+	V+	V+ (NR x4)	NR
Quality	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Gradient	645 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside but committing			
Hitchability	fair			
Length	1.3 miles (bottom .3 miles are flat)			
Season	May to July (Crystal Gorge is too high, but not peak)			
Gauge	Crystal above Avalanche Creek (barometer)			
Put-in	.1 mile downstream of bible camp			
Take-out	Beaver Lake in Marble			

Featured in films such as Valhalla and Off the Deep End, Yule creek rises above Beaver Lake with the largest set of runnable drops in Colorado. Key word is large. The consequences are big, and though technically easy to paddle, things can go wrong very fast due to the sheer size of the drops, and the velocity achieved by running them. Adrenaline levels will be high, crash and burns potentially deadly, and this description is only justified by the numerous successful descents that have occurred.

The put-in is immediately above Cauldron (9'), but be prepared to portage the next drop river left. Below this are ten drops, in what turns into a surprisingly beautiful, although barren gorge. All of the drops go, but a few are scary to run blind. It's recommended to pre-scout the entire run from the rim to know the drops and eddy placement.

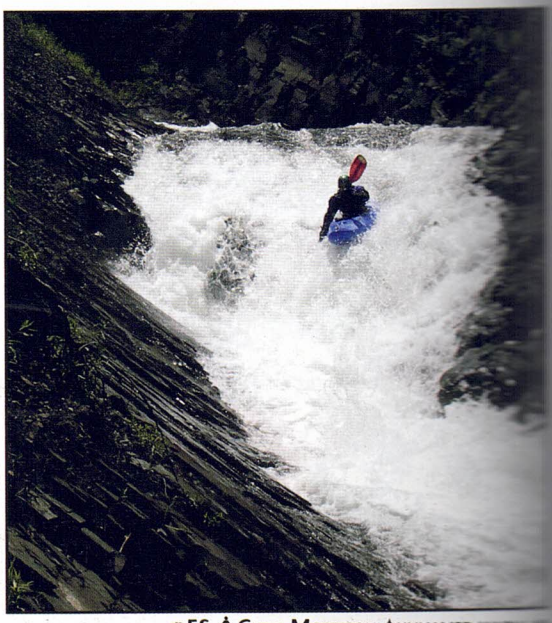
The bottom four drops are why Yule can be an absolutely amazing adventure, or a painful failure. If not committed to running the bottom four after scouting, then don't paddle the rest. It's a difficult hike out on river right and it forces you to walk directly across private land.

The series starts with Ball Check (30'), which leads directly into the Wall Check slide. Paddlers must climb over a ridge near the top of the slide. Failure to negotiate this ridge sends paddlers careening river right into a sharp looking rock pile. The lesser of two evils is to hit the wall without too much speed, and with one end of the boat first. I failed to do so on my second trip, and paid with a compressed vertebrae.

The third drop, Oriental Massage, is the largest drop (60-80' total) and has seen the scariest carnage. Start from the river right eddy at the lip, paddle out the back of the eddy by ducking under the branches, and then keep it straight and more importantly upright. The lip 30' into the slide has a tendency to send paddlers airborne, and occasionally inverted. Happy Ending is the final drop.

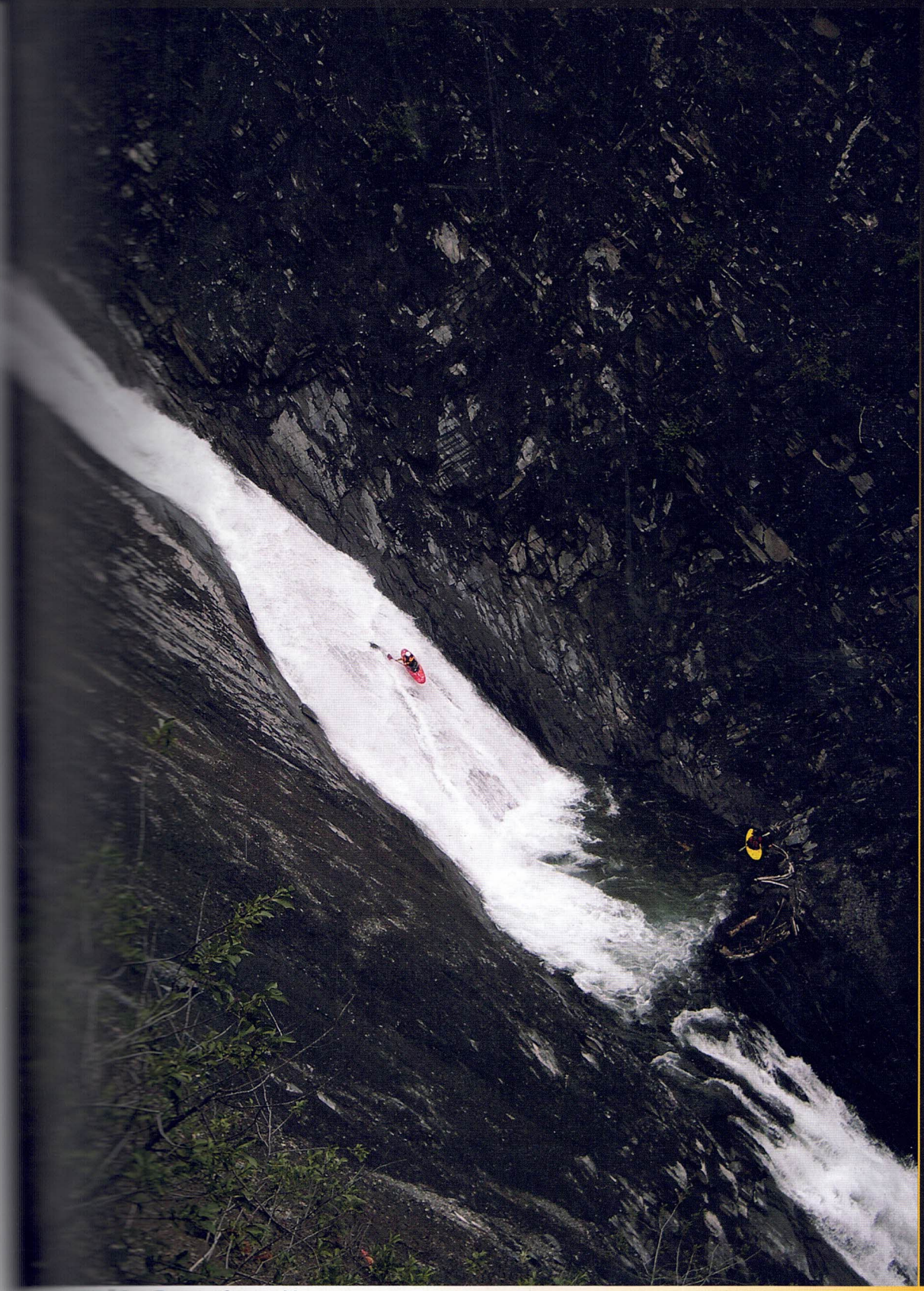
Directions

The take-out is at the Beaver Lake parking area near Marble (same as the Crystal Gorge). When you paddle out of Yule you will need to ferry across the Crystal and walk over the berm to the lake. To get to the put-in and scout point, set the odometer at the bridge leading over the Crystal on Quarry Road. At exactly 1.0 miles, park on the side of the road and hike to the river to view the bottom four. If excitement levels are properly in check, continue up the road another .3 miles and park on the side. Hike down the steep embankment, angling slightly upstream to reach the put-in drop. The driveway turnoff to the bible camp is .1 miles up the road. DO NOT put-in at the bible camp per landowner request. Private land abound, so be courteous.



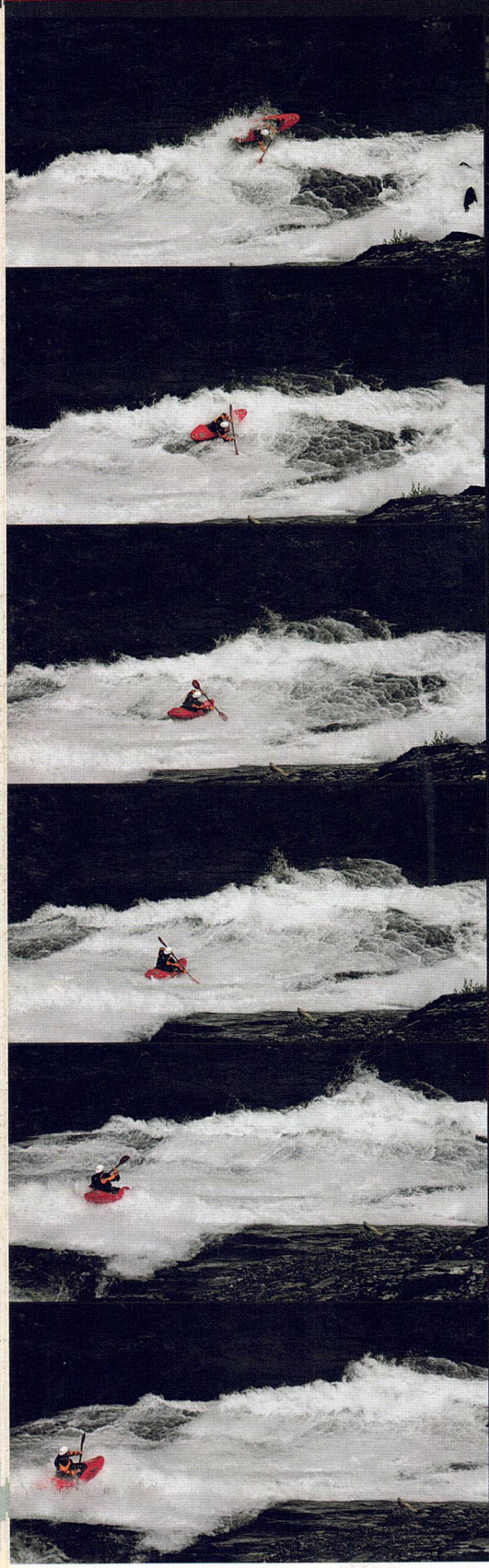
ES Chris Morrison UNNAMED

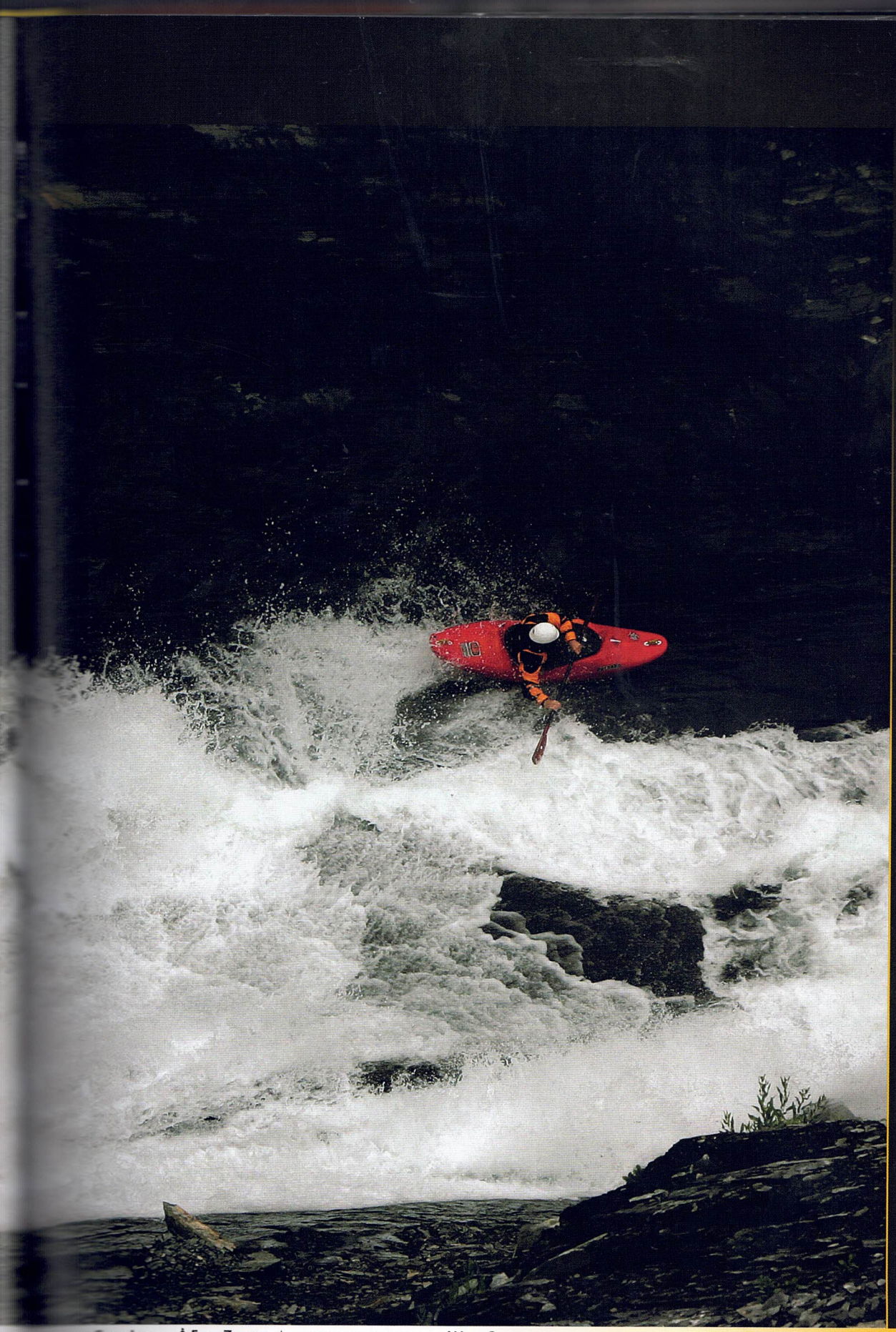
As the largest set of runnable drops in Colorado, the Yule creek bottom four represent the ultimate challenge for kayakers looking to control insane amounts of velocity.



Crystal • Yule Creek

Yule Creek





Chris Larsen Fred Zacherl Grinding the perfect line, Wall Check

Crystal Gorge

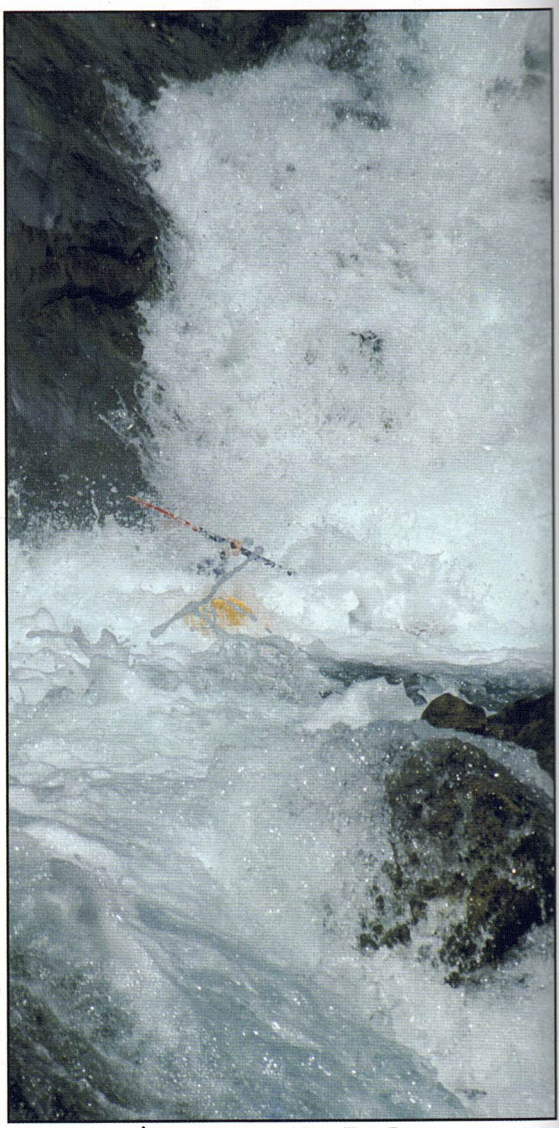
Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	200	270	400	550
Character	Inner or bust	both are nice	top only	survival skills
Class	V (V+)	V (V+)	V+ (NR)	NR
Quality	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Gradient	380 fpm average, 450 fpm crux			
Remoteness	in a gorge, 50 miles from a hospital			
Hitchability	good with other recreationalists			
Length	1.8 miles			
Season	July, August (after peak)			
Gauge	Crystal River abv Avalanche Creek (barometer)			
Put-in	upstream of Lizard Lake			
Take-out	Beaver Lake in Marble			

The unofficial hair boaters convention is held here every year, in the second half of the summer, well after peak flows. Paddlers have been known to drive through the night from Montana just to catch this gem, which boasts the same scenery as the rest of the upper Crystal drainage, but with about twice the gradient as most creeks. Seemingly insignificant fluctuations in the flow can mean the difference between everyone showing up (20+ of the who's who of the Rockies), or two friends sitting at the take-out alone, wondering, "Where the hell is everyone?"

A difference of 60 cfs on the gauge (which, due to the barometer effect may only be about 20 cfs in the gorge) can significantly change the lines and the skill level needed to make them. This fluctuation is even more apparent in the Inner Crystal Gorge. The well-defined lower section of the run has walls occasionally less than ten feet in width, and the entire recommended flow window is only about 150 cfs on the gauge. Drop in at the wrong level, and either section has the potential to destroy you and your party, no matter who you are or how well you think you paddle. Drop in at a good level, and you'll be paddling one of the highest quality V+ runs in the Rockies.

Two sections—the less difficult and more open Upper, and the steep and committing Inner. The run starts out with a short meandering float until paddlers approach a double drop slide and an 8' boof. Recently both have been partially clogged with wood from the avalanche paths upstream. Although all of the action can still be run, the wood situation changes from year to year, and you will almost always have to deal with a couple of tricky wood dodges throughout the run. One log in the Inner requires a delicate boof to duck move that greets about 30% of paddlers upside down.

Steep technical whitewater winds its way through the scree fields, creating what feels like three' step after three'

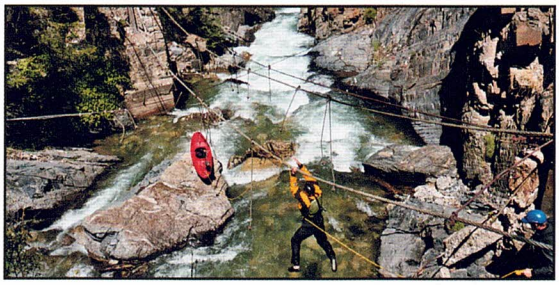


Jared Johnson Brian Gilmore Pine Tree Falls mystery move

THE UNOFFICIAL HAIR BOATERS CONVENTION IS HELD HERE AFTER PEAK OF THE COLORADO SEASON, REJOICING IN A STUNNINGLY PRETTY PLACE, ON A CREEK WITH ABOUT TWICE THE GRADIENT AS MOST.

Crystal • Crystal Gorge

TODD PATRICK/TODDPATRICKPHOTO.COM GARY EDGEWORTH THE GATEKEEPER TO THE INNER SANCTUARY, ZUTE CHUTE



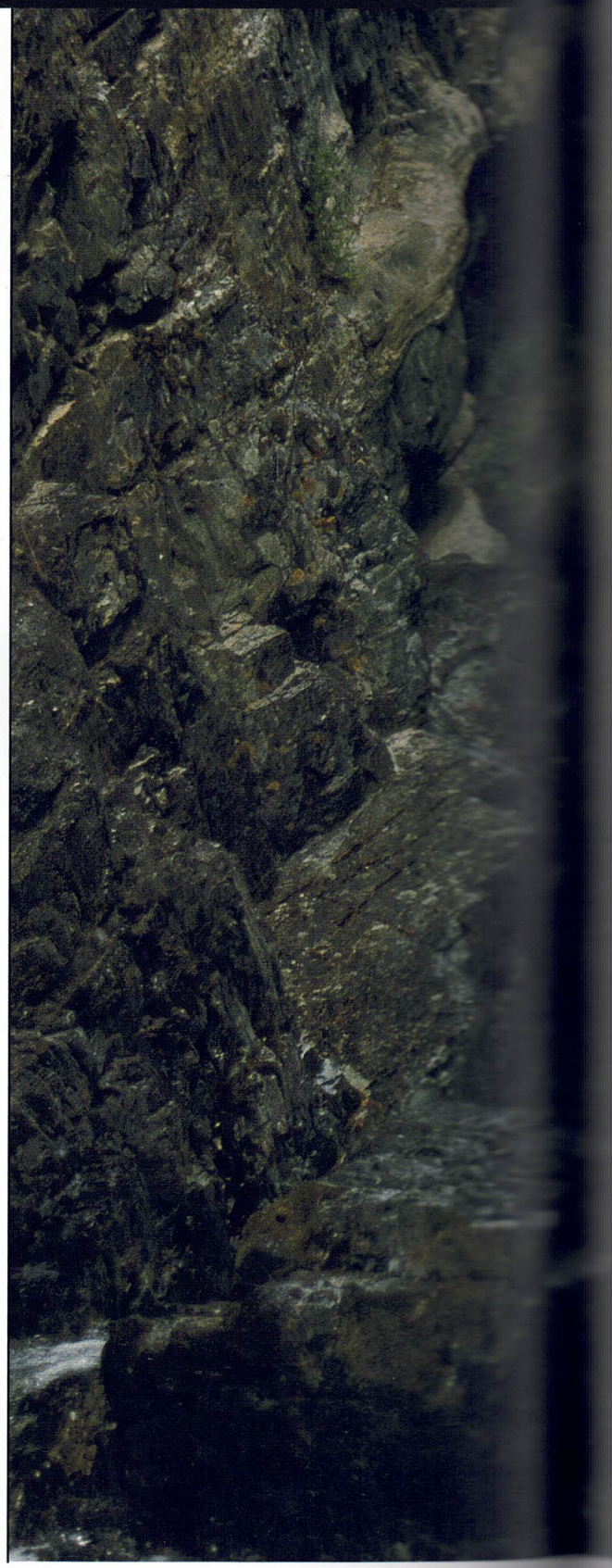
step. The section culminates with Pine Tree Falls, the defining drop of the Upper section. Corkscrew serves up a tricky lead-in to this sweet boof to falls move, with two more drops quickly after. The action steepens here with a few corners, boofs, holes to miss, and one super bony drop as the finale to the Upper section. If the water is high or if you've had problems, take out on the left bank, hike up to the trail, and hike downstream around the Inner.

The intimate Inner gorge is the highlight of the Crystal and contains the bottom nine drops of the run, excluding Millers Falls. Forty' Zute Chute welcomes huckers to the *Inner Sanctuary*, one of the most difficult sections in Colorado. Skilled maneuvering, a few sneak lines and potential portages, and you face what I feel is the most nerve wracking ending to any run. Two drops that must be run blind (unless opting for a long pre-scout hike from Zute), both of which have bad holes, shallow landings, and tricky boof setups. The last drop is called Perfect Piton, but I always tell myself, "Two Boofs to Freedom." Do not miss the large pool below Perfect Piton, where the exit is currently blocked by a friendly wood strainer. Piece of mind for the first paddler down without safety, since you shouldn't flush too far in the event of total destruction.

Millers Falls is the massive set of falls below the Inner, parts of which have been run. No one has found an easy way to run the runnable drops and easily portage the rest. Hike up the steep boater eroded trail on river left to the old mining-track grade, the main trail out from the Inner. Enjoy the view, and then portage downhill. Put in on the class II and float out, being discrete near the landowners. Hike over the river right berm, and paddle across Beaver Lake to the take-out.

Directions

The take-out is the parking lot at Beaver Lake, just East of Marble. Follow FR 314 east, up *the hill* until you've gone 1.1 miles, and then head right to Lizard Lake. Drive past Lizard Lake, down the 4WD FR 314, and park at the right side pullouts next to the river. A stock Subaru Outback *can* make it to the East side of Lizard Lake if you are short on large shuttle rigs, leaving a short and easy walk. 4WD is recommended for the entire area.



@Mike "Chunderboy" Sullivan ⛹ Jared Johnson 💧the first of Two Boofs to Freedom, Inner Sanctuary finale

Getting the beatdown in the Crystal Gorge

-Kyle McCutchen

It was a very warm day, and spirits were high after camping in the meadow near Crystal Mill Falls with a glowing campfire warming the night. The vegetation was lush all around us, a rarity in the summer of 2001 when fire danger ran high around the state. Water levels had been low across the state as well, which is perhaps why we misjudged this day so much.

"I'm so excited to guide you down this," said Andre, an Airforce Academy brat well on his way to becoming a full-fledged fighter pilot, and a damn good second year paddler. "You've guided me down so many runs in the state, and now I finally get to show you something."

"Yeah, I can't believe I haven't done this yet," I say, anticipation peaking as we gear up at the put-in. My long time paddling friend from high school, Travis Winn rounded out the group of three, after getting his mini-van all the way up to the lake.

On the float in Dre (as we called him by the cliché nickname) explained that it was a titch higher, but it was really low last time he did it, "so it should be good."

The first drop came quickly with a beautiful wave train entrance into a steeper wave train that hit a rowdy eddy at the bottom. My only beta below was to boof hard right at the next horizon line, and as I watched Dre and Travis peel out ahead of me it seemed simple enough. To this day that was one of the biggest, sickest, boof setups I have ever seen. Looking down on top of Travis in the eddy, while launching tail first, I knew one thing—today was going to be an amazing day.

In the next eddy Dre was looking a bit nervous. I didn't say anything, and it didn't really concern me since I preferred leading, so I led. The whitewater was pushy and steep, and about every 5th or 6th hole I really had to crank to keep from getting stuck or back endered. The average wave was probably two feet high (substantial for the gradient), and we only had small, but fortunately well-defined eddies every 100 yards or so. We kept the pace alive until Dre yelled and signaled for us to eddy out, a short ways above Corkscrew.

"Man, I was getting pushed all over the place," said Dre rather excitedly, "but I felt better because I was watching you and you were getting shoved all over the place too."

Smiles were everywhere, and the consensus was, "that shit was big!"

A scout at Corkscrew confirmed that we hadn't seen the end of the goods, as Pine Tree Falls was looking just as burly. The runout of Corkscrew was dropping quickly into the falls. Without any good eddies between the two drops, the vote was to route it from the top, and boof everything that stood in the way. Dre and I opted to go first, with Travis pulling safety—not that I thought it would do any good.

Four strokes in and I was hauling ass and on-line. What line... Corkscrew completely subbed me out (an impressive feat in a full size creek boat), and slingshoted me towards the lip of Pine Tree. I freaked and caught the eddy on the left, leaving me with a poor setup. The peel out still worked though, and one stroke dropped me into the hole, and then white. I went deep, resurfacing with an aggressive backender, and by the time I rolled up I was already paddling hard for the river right line on the next drop, and slipping back.

'The boils!' I had to get right, but the boils were too tall, and I couldn't get there. A plethora of desperate strokes later and I found myself somewhat purposely broached against some shallow rocks in the middle of the river, directly above what appeared to be a root ball I had heard about for years. It was too late to back up and reset in the eddy, so I dropped in with a handboof, sliding down the trunk of the tree, and fortunately making it back into the center of the river, leaving me three strokes to clear the last ledge drop of about 4 feet (what I now know is a man-

made dam). Dre was in the eddy.

I landed dead flat, and on the upstream side of the boil line. I didn't make it. A brutal backender slammed me into a sidesurf, where I spent what felt like an eternity just trying to get into a comfortable side surf so I could get free. No love. The first window shade rotated me all the way around, and prior to rolling up I made the decision to swim for it.

As I exited my boat the current pushed me under the falls, and the down force dropped me to the bottom of the river, then literally rolled me along the rocks like a rag doll. I resurfaced in the river right backwash next to my boat and paddle, clawing at the smooth walls, just in time for it to recirc me again. Dre tried to hit me with a rope, but we didn't connect, nor did we connect on the second and third throw, largely due to the current sporadically pulling me under in a seam coming off the wall. When I came to the surface sometime after the third throw I could see Dre bringing in the rope as fast as he could to get setup for a fourth try, fear on his face, and a constant slew of curse words barely audible above the sound of the water. I was scared. I began to contemplate trying to go deep, but was torn between the option of flushing out and into the unknown drops downstream, or continuing to take my chances with the hole. I was tired. I wanted out of the river.

Then, through pure luck I caught a recirc that brought me to the surface further downstream than before, and I found a handhold. Fingers death gripped, I waited as Travis made his final steps from the lip of the drop to the ledge above, dropping a rope down to me, and giving me an out.

I was beatdown. Everyone was tired. We made our way to the trail early, and hiked out.

I didn't return to the gorge for four seasons.

Mill Falls & SF Crystal

South Fork Crystal

The South Fork Crystal, and signature Punchbowl Falls (25' to 25' slide-to-verts), will never be a regularly run affair for one daunting reason—access. Not of the legal variety, but rather from intense 4WD and/or annual avalanche debris blocking the roads. Paddlers that overcome this issue will be rewarded with running one of the largest vertical falls in the state, and a handful of other rarely run (let alone seen) slides and falls above the Punchbowls. Directions for either access option follow.

Directions: Option A, and the most exercised is to drive the 4WD road past Crystal Mill Falls to the ghost town (summer cabins) of Crystal, and veer right up FR 317. The road gets even worse here, and undoubtedly some hiking will be necessary to reach the falls. If any of the avalanche paths in the first part of this drive shut you down, then give up and go run something else. If you make it a good distance then start the hike.

Option B is the better of the two, but usually isn't possible due to large avalanche debris/snow drifts. Start from Crested Butte's Upper East run, and drive north on Gothic Road up and over Schofield Pass on FR 317. If you make it up and over, quit reading and celebrate! When clear the road is very smooth relative to the rest of the Crystal drainage, and the headwaters of the South Fork Crystal contain a 50' falls that Brent Toepper once ran. Downstream, a fantastic but short section of class IV slides, and a double drop that falls a manmade 8' from an old mining area dam into a natural 13'. It's an easy float from here to a road crossing, where you can hike down to the Punchbowls. The condition of the pass has been improving at the Punchbowls, but check with locals to see if the pass is clear on both sides before attempting the Schofield Pass drive.

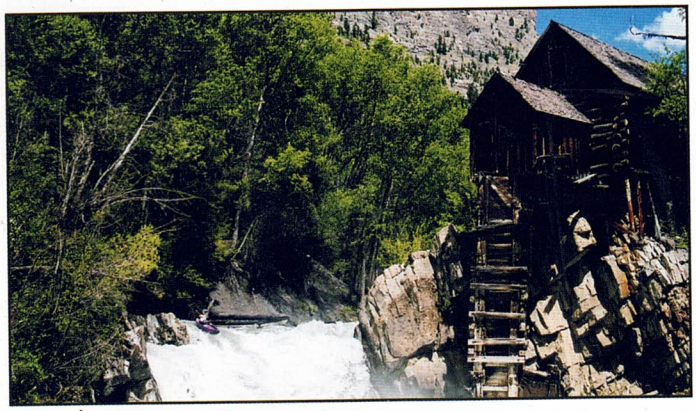
CFS	400<optimal<1200
Class	V
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	verts and stuff
Length	variable park-and-huck
Season	July, August (not peak)
Gauge	Crystal abv Avalanche Crk (barometer)
Put-in	at the lip of a falls
Take-out	at the pool of a falls

Crystal Mill Falls

Crystal Mill Falls is a stout and chunky fifteen' falls with a tricky entrance and an ugly river-left hydraulic at good flows, so running it is sure to get the adrenaline flowing. However, the real allure of firing it up is cranking a sweet boof next to the Crystal Mill, quite possibly the most well known landmark in the Colorado Rockies. It is certainly my favorite postcard on the gas station display rack. I recommend taking out here in park-and-huck style. The run below is the easiest section upstream of Marble. The major hazard is usually wood—a real issue since the run lacks good eddies until a mini-gorge is reached. At the end of the mini-gorge is an easily shuttle-scouted 6' sloping falls that should be run on the far right to avoid the terminal hydraulic. Know the take-out, since missing it will lead into the Crystal Gorge at suicidal high flow.

Directions: Follow rugged FR 314 east, up the hill until you've gone 1.1 miles, and then head right to Lizard Lake. Drive past Lizard Lake, down the 4WD road, and park at the right side pullouts next to the river for a convenient take-out. The put-in is upstream after about 3 miles of crawling-speed 4WD. Park at the falls and put-in above or below.

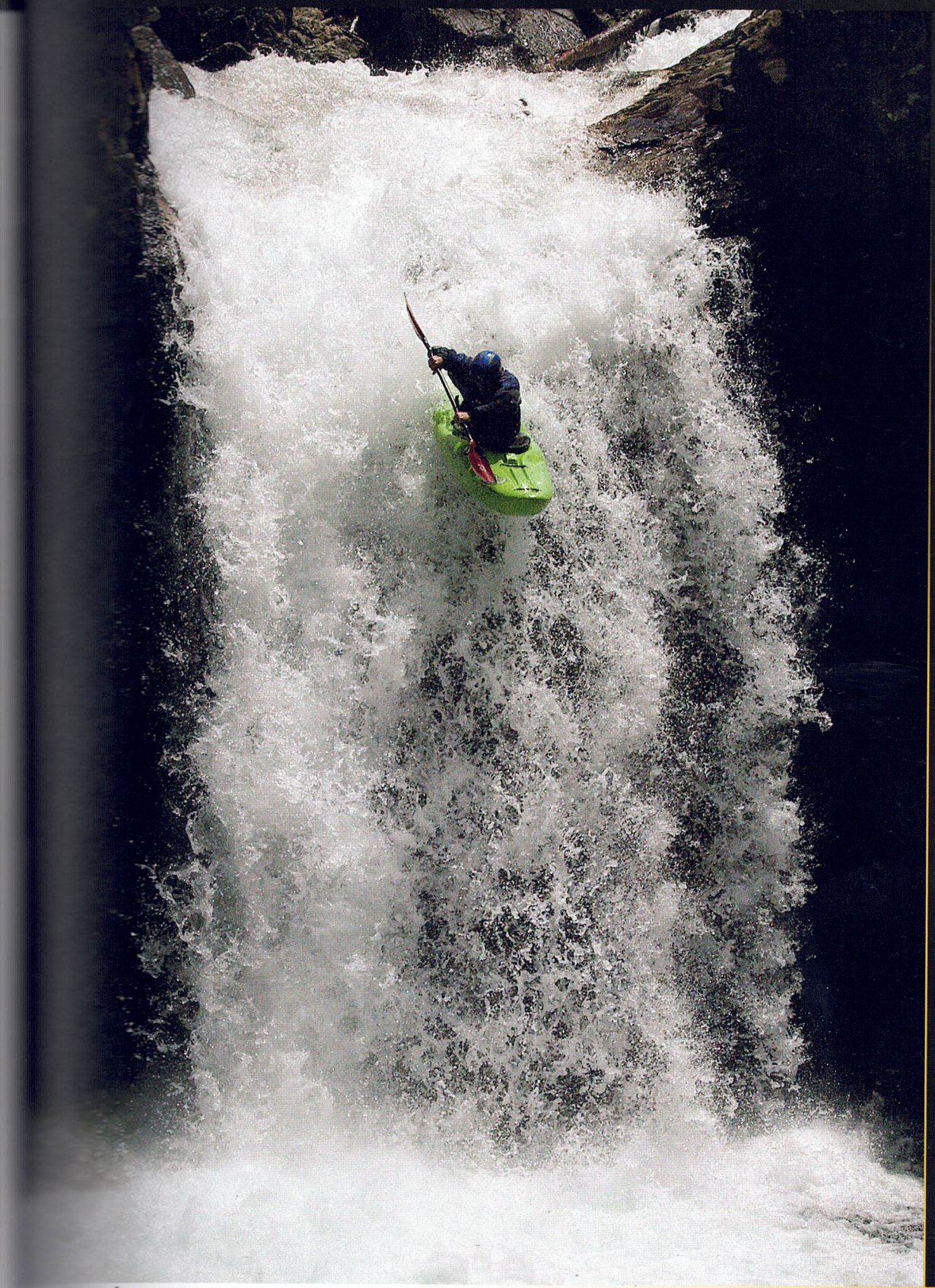
CFS	500<optimal<1500
Class	III (IV-, V)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	110 fpm
Length	3 miles
Season	May-July
Gauge	Crystal abv Avalanche Crk (barometer)
Put-in	Crystal Mill Falls
Take-out	above Crystal Gorge



KM Donnie Smith Postcard perfect

Jared Johnson Chunderboy Punchbowls

DESPITE THE GRUELING 4WD TRAVEL OF THE UPPER CRYSTAL REACHES, THE PARK, HIKE, AND HUCK OPTIONS ARE SOME OF THE BEST IN THE STATE FOR PADDLERS DESIRING QUALITY AIR TIME. OR HAIR TIME.



KM ES PERFECT 10 ON THE BOOF—THE FIRST OF THE PUNCHBOWLS, SOUTH FORK CRYSTAL

North Fork Crystal

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	350	500	850	1200
Character	shallow	fun & easy	small eddy	rowdy
Class	IV (V)	V- (V)	V (V+)	V+
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	360 fpm			
Remoteness	high, with a brutal 4WD road and 50 miles to a hospital			
Hitchability	hike the shuttle			
Length	.65 miles			
Season	June, July (or earlier if the road is clear of snow)			
Gauge	Avalanche Creek, Crystal River (barometer)			
Put-in	top of Cake			
Take-out	scree field			

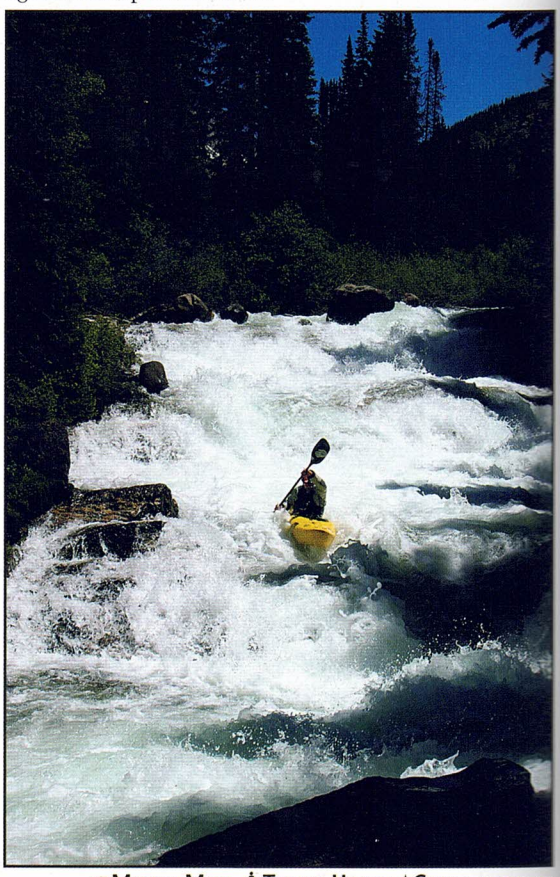
The North Fork Crystal is arguably one of the best runs in the state for the creeker who's looking for fantastic high alpine scenery and quality low volume whitewater. Situated in a large wooded grove that shadows the run, the drops appear like an oasis at the end of a long bumpy road. With the sunshine filtering through the trees above, softly illuminating the crystal clear water as it pours over smooth rock, it won't take long to realize that this is some of the most amazing scenery in the state.

Yet, the NFC remained an unintended secret for years due to an overzealous class VI rating, a time consuming drive, and few runs in the area with a similar season. The North Fork in it's entirety doesn't contain much that is easily runnable, with only seven drops and a short runout in a mere .65 of a mile.

The first four drops have an amusement park theme to them at regular flows, with a jump start put-in eddy at the lip of the first slide called Cake. Icing, a steep, clean and fast slide follows in quick succession, with a small eddy that you may or may not catch in between the two. Many of us have begun to name the rapids by number, and I don't know anybody that actually knows the names of the other drops. Not that you need to know the names, because if you can count to 4 and then eddy out on the left, you can run the top half of this run multiple times, and you will.

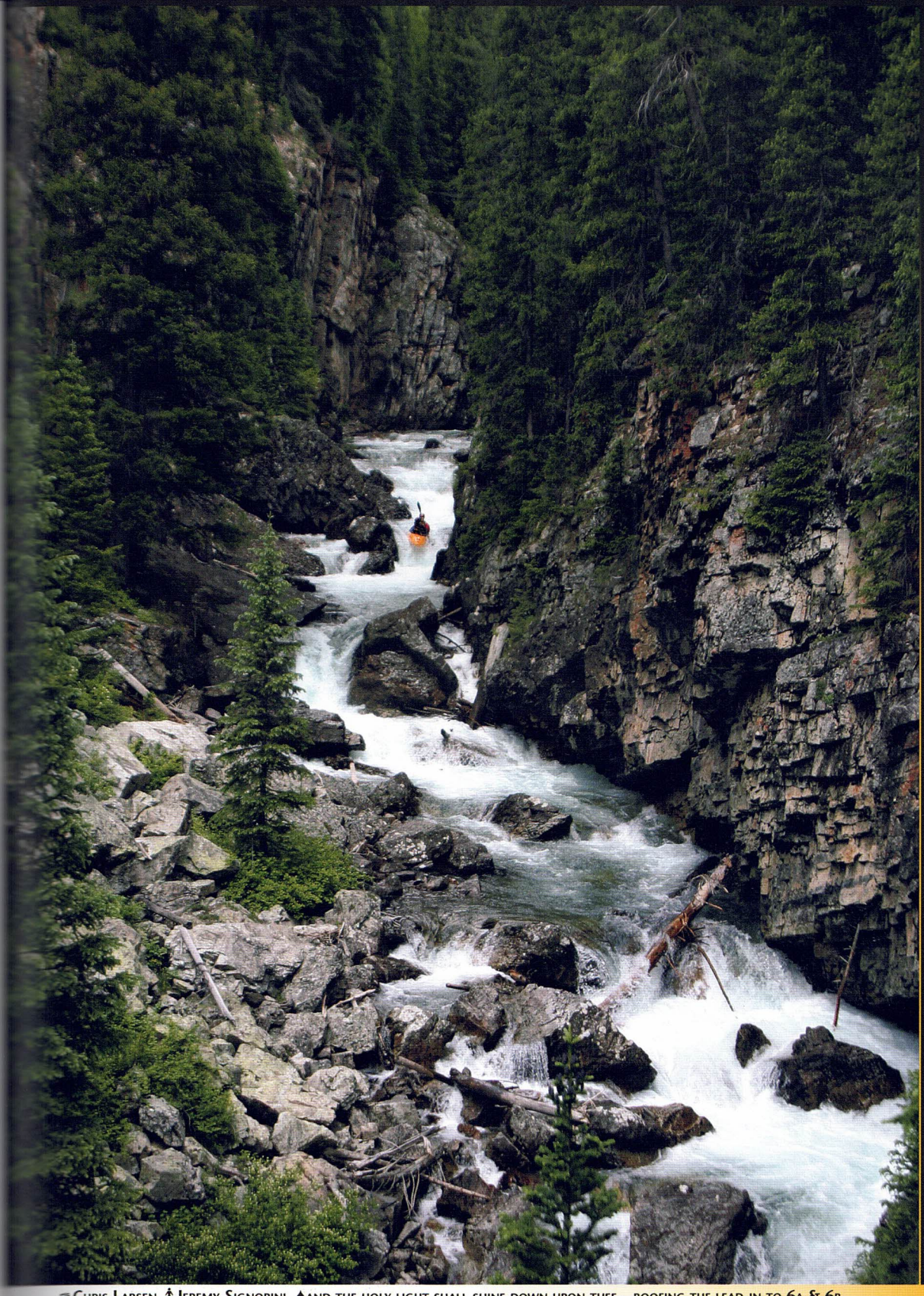
Drop Five tends to cause the most trouble on the run. With a turning boof entrance set up to get right, and then charge back towards the center to ride out a spine that divides the current on the lower half of the drop. Make it to the eddy below this, and then feed your party down one at a time to the eddy above the crux.

The crux drops of the run, which I refer to as 6A, 6B, and 6C, make up the cascading mini gorge of the run. Although most choose to portage at least part of this drop, it goes with a proper amount of elbow padding, stroke timing, and balance. Over the last several years the existing logs have actually made this section easier. Paddlers that choose to run or portage the crux, rather than take-out after the first four drops, will be rewarded with the biggest vert of the run at the exit of the crux gorge. Take out on the left bank after two mank drops and a more defined mini boof against the open scree field.



Melissa Mora Tommy Hilleke Cake, the put-in

Fantastic high-alpine scenery and quality low volume creeking with a park-and-huck character. One of the top "truly colorado" experiences.

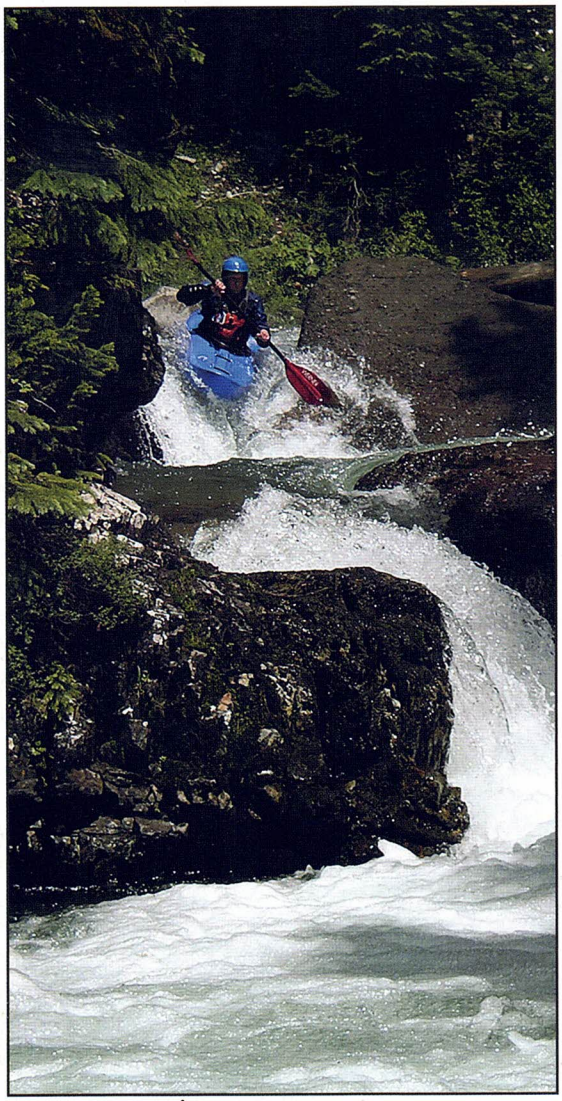


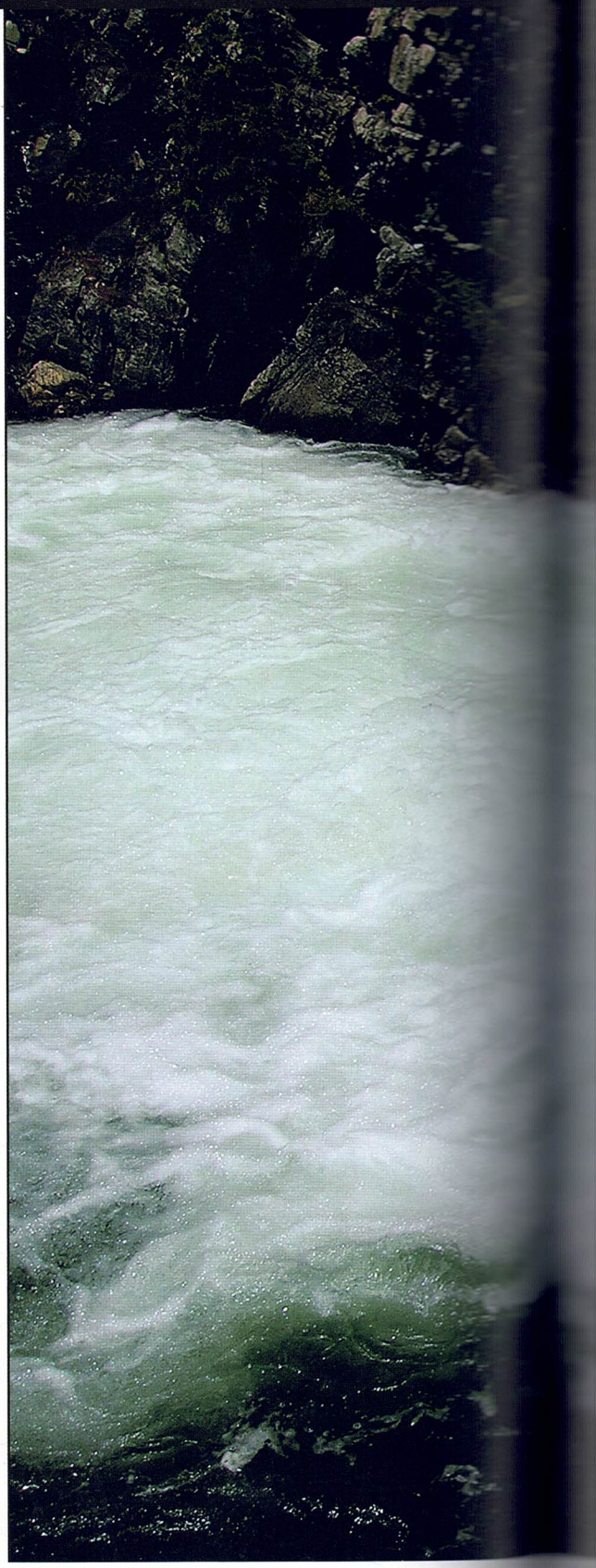
Chris Larsen Jeremy Signorini and the holy light shall shine down upon thee—boofing the lead-in to 6a & 6b

North Fork Crystal

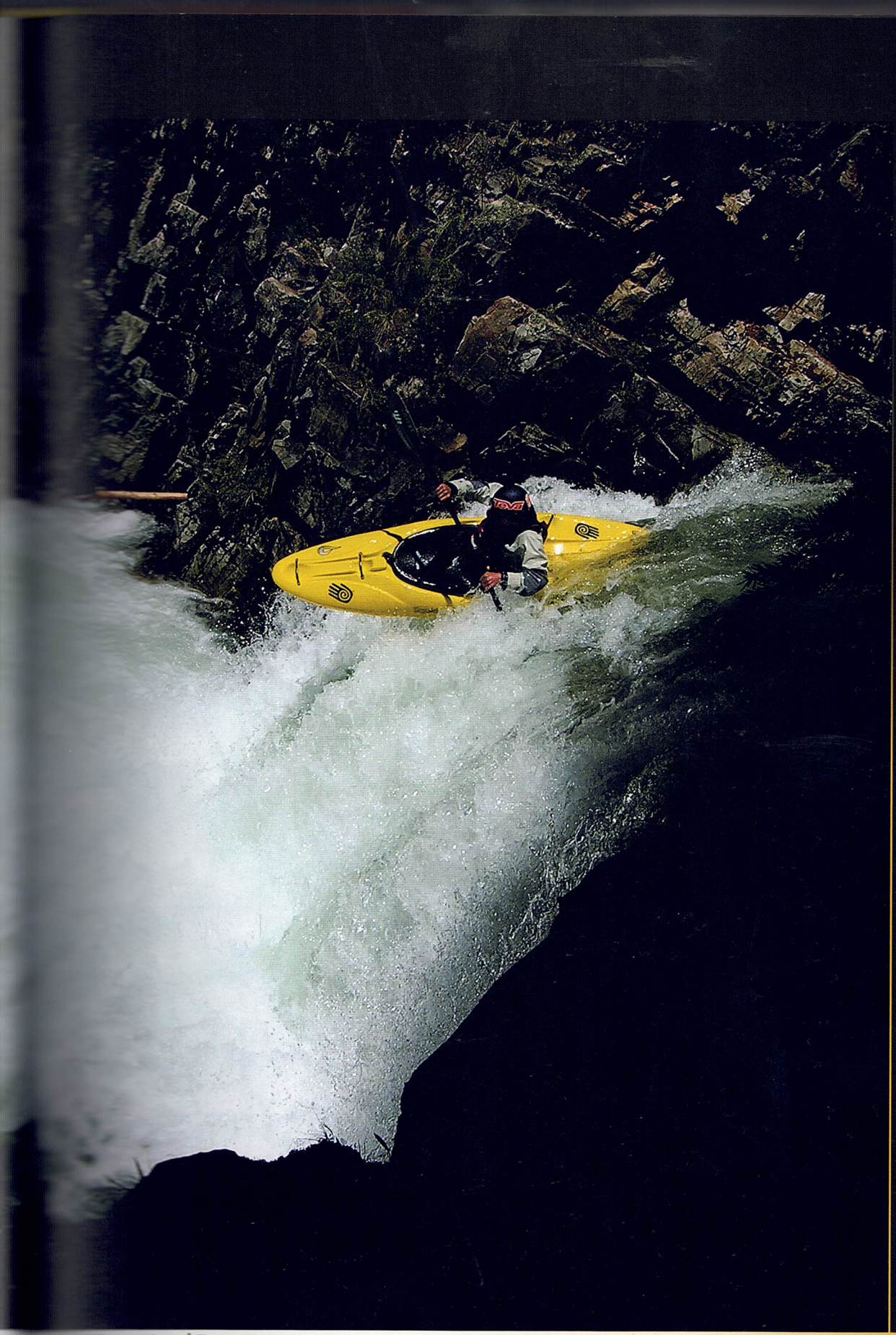
Directions

From Beaver Lake take FR 314 east to the top of "the hill" and then take a left on Lost Trail Rd (FR 315) toward Lead King Basin. Follow this road for many slow miles of non-technical four wheel driving as you wind up above tree line, and then descend back down into the top of the North Fork Crystal valley. When you cross over the creek to the river left side continue to drive down stream for another 3/4 of a mile. When you see the first drop, park. The put-in eddy will be 10 feet from your vehicle. Hike your shuttle. It is possible to access the North Fork from the Crystal River side via FR 314 to FR 315, but the 2 miles of 4WD between the ghost town of Crystal and the North Fork run are heinous, and not recommended. Four wheel drive high-clearance vehicles are highly recommended, and probably mandatory for either route.





PETE STROMBERG ES #3, A FUN DOUBLE SET



Melissa Mora 🚶 Tommy Hilleke 💧drop #4—might have to run it again, and again, and again

Upper Yule & Muddy Creek

Upper Yule

Located in the high alpine Raggeds Wilderness area to the south of Marble, this is an okay run for those looking for more adventure than what the standard runs of the Crystal drainage offer. Since the upper Crystal River Valley offers a good amount of high quality creeking, Upper Yule struggles to attract many boaters, thanks in part to a brutal hike at high elevation, and a handful of drops that are simply too steep and manky for anyone to run them... yet. Hiking to as high as 11,000' (putting in on the snow banks) can offer good class IV and V mini-creeking action over a handful of drops before things mellow out at Thompson Flats. Then, a mini gorge pinches in, creating a handful of technical V's and some NR's further down. Portage past here on river right, being sure to check out the mining cave and cart still resting on the tracks. The end of the run drops into a few manmade rapids caused by the hillside of discarded marble chunks (a sight in itself), and ends with a set of massive, unrun falls at the take-out parking lot.

Directions: Continue upstream from Yule Proper to where the Quarry Road dead-ends. Here a trailhead leads to the quarry, paralleling the bottom drops on river left, and continues past the discard pile, and up the side of it, eventually offering a sweet view looking into the Quarry bottom. Once past the quarry, you'll cross to the river right side of the creek, and continue walking for a few miles. Put-in at the first snowfields.

Or drive back down the road a ½ mile to a wooden sign for "Yule Creek" and park at the small pullout. This trail leads to the same put-in. Both hikes suck. Don't blunder past the point of no return at the take-out.

CFS	700<optimal<1500
Class	V (P)
Quality	★★
Gradient	350 fpm
Length	2 miles or more
Season	May, June
Gauge	Avalanche Crk, Crystal River (barometer)
Put-in	snowfields at 10,000'
Take-out	Marble Quarry

Muddy Creek

Nestled next to Hwy 133 upstream of Paonia Reservoir, on the back side of McClure from the Crystal Basin, Muddy Creek usually isn't muddy because it usually isn't running. When it is, the short section near mm 33 is a rockin' good time, and the preferred method of breaking up the drive over McClure Pass. Check out the level and the rapids visually each trip, since the river left bank is a constantly adjusting landslide. Thus, big water is necessary to cover the rough river bottom that rarely sees enough water to carve out a smooth path—and ideal simply because its big water. It's the classic flooded-creek-style run, and roadside in typical Colorado fashion. Be heads up in this short stretch for a very low bridge near the end of the action. Although not worth the special trip, the pit-stop value is high when Muddy is muddy.

CFS	200<min<400<best
Class	IV+<400<V
Quality	★★★
Gradient	100 fpm
Length	2 miles
Season	peak & rain
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Hwy 133 mm 33

Directions: Roadside on Hwy 133, a short ways above Paonia Reservoir, near mm 33.

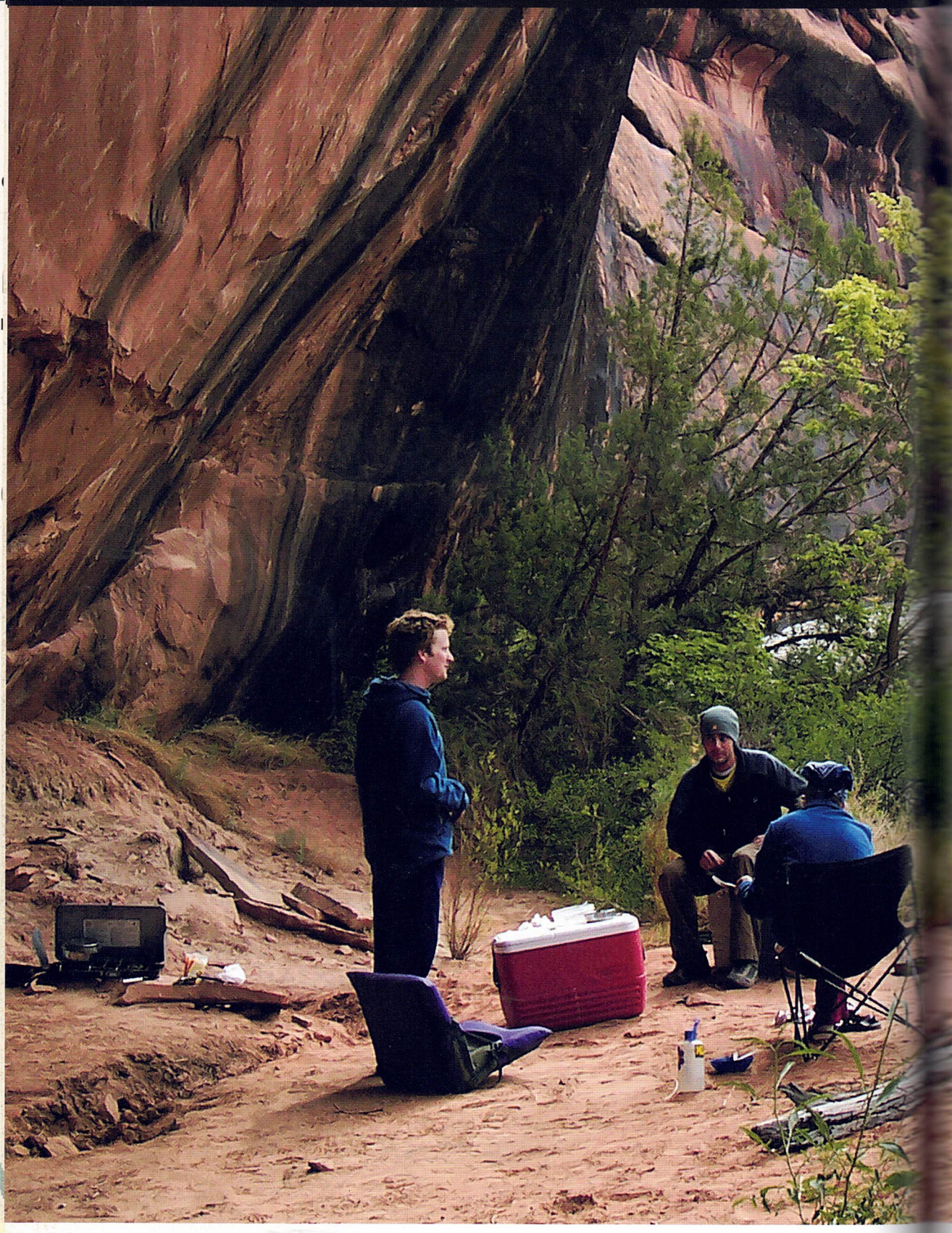
Josh Sandage Gordon Dalton good action above Thompson Flats

"There's a river somewhere that flows through the lives of everyone."

-Roberta Flack

Mark Cohen ✦ Reed Koeneke

Dolores Drainage

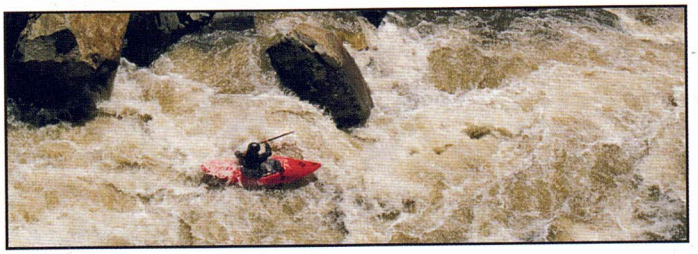


Chris Hofer ♦Dolores River camping near Anasazi Ruin

Rico Falls

In the early spring there is sufficient flow for paddling the steep creek section of the Dolores above Rico. As Lizard Head Pass Road slithers up alongside the Dolores, the Rico Falls section unleashes from under the shadow of Lizard Head Peak. The regular put-in is about two miles above Rico and contains continuous, clean and crisp high elevation class V. The scenery is the standard San Juan—amazing, and the valley above the run plays host to a fantastic array of wildflowers. The take-out is in Rico near the Settling Ponds.

There is also some low-volume continuous mank on Snow Spur Creek coming down from Lizard Head Pass that is marginally worthwhile. Below this, where the East Fork Dolores comes in, are five sketchy miles of continuous class III which ends at the Rico Falls section. Watch for wood. Both runs require high flow, which is at least 500 cfs on the Rico gauge.



Directions: Drive up past Rico two miles or so until you see a flat, meandering stretch of water with a turnout on the opposite side of the road. This is the put-in for Rico Falls. The take-out is in Rico.

CFS	250<best
Class	V
Quality	★★★
Gradient	140 fpm
Length	2 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Lizard Head Pass
Take-out	Rico

Upper Dolores (Stoner Stampede)

Looking to throw down somewhere outside of one of the regions whitewater parks sprouting up like skateparks in the late 90's in every town blessed with a river, regular flows and minimal agricultural interest resistance. These parks are great, but sometimes surfing a line of perfectly formed bedrock slab waves, in the middle of a sub-alpine valley, nestled high in the spiritual center of early southwestern civilization is well, life changing. A far cry from the slickrock canyons downriver, the Dolores below Rico is a clear, cold and fast mountain stream. The crispy water looks suitable to drink, but mining tailings just below Rico make it NR.

The water is still refreshing and the run is of a very high quality for the surfing enthusiast when the water is there. The run begins in a uniform riverbed that should be fast with few eddies if you're hoping for epic surf downstream. Many miles of the run are like this but near mm 29 the river bottom transforms from cobble to sloping bedrock and river wide "V" waves become abundant. At different flows there can be upwards of 15 playspots on the run. At high flows these waves can have sticky centers for the uninitiated and great shoulders for the blunt addict. Direct access to these waves is limited by private property so doing the entire run is really the only legal option. You want at least 1200 cfs on the Dolores gauge, the higher the better. In the spring of '05, this run hit 6,000 cfs. It contains truly world class play when it's this high. The usual season begins mid-April and goes through mid-June.

CFS	500<min<800<best
Class	III
Quality	★★★★★ (play)
Gradient	50 fpm
Length	14 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	Dolores nr Rico
Put-in	Bear Creek trailhead
Take-out	Stoner

Directions: The put-in is off Hwy 145 at the Bear Creek trailhead, about 6 miles above the take-out at the bridge in Stoner.

Upper Dolores Bonus Action

The Lower two miles of Bear Creek provide hike-in, continuous class IV action. Hike the switchbacks up the Bear Creek trail for a couple miles, then hike down to the run. Watch for possible fences and wood. Also, the lower two miles of the Roaring Fork of the Dolores, coming in a few miles above Bear, offers fun class IV creeking in a beautiful valley. You can drive up the Roaring Fork Rd to a suitable put-in. This is a smaller but better option than Bear, and the access is easy. Other options in this untapped valley include the West Fork (20 miles of class III), and the Dolores town wave, which is behind the ballfields in Dolores. This wave is good early season, from about 1250 cfs and up on the Dolores gauge, until the wave gets flooded by backwater.

-Steven Steinberg (all)

JENNIFER BUCK RUSSELL KELLY RICO FALLS

"After one looks at miles of fast flat, these perfectly formed wave/holes loom beyond a horizon-line like a hallucination for the surf hungry boater, but they're real...Thank you lord." -CRCII

Gus Gusciora Steven Steinberg Stampede surf session

Keystone Canyon (no beta box)

Just downstream of Telluride is the best local creeking option. Although the class V+ at the top of the canyon, starting 3.5 miles downstream from Telluride, has been run, the more commonly run section is the lower part of the canyon. This stretch is challenging V- and is accessed by driving up to the Two-Rivers Housing Project via the Illium Rd and hiking up about a 1/2 mile or so, putting in above a footbridge. You will know when to stop hiking. Take out about 2.5 miles downstream near the confluence with Bilk Creek. The Lower Mile of Bilk is also very fun and very continuous V at high water. Options for huge class V-VI exist about three miles up this creek, which has a mini-gorge and huge falls and slides in an amazing alpine setting. Bring your video camera.

Other iffy creeking options in the San Miguel drainage include the Howards Fork in Ames, Bear Creek into Telluride, and the two sets of roadside falls up Leopard Creek, which enters the San Miguel in Placerville. All these options need high water, at least 800 on the gauge in Placerville.

Directions: The 1/2 mile hike to the put-in is off Illium Rd., a south turn around 4 miles downstream of Telluride. The take-out is on Hwy 145 near Bilk Creek.

Sawpit

This is your classic exciting but feature-less intermediate run. Ultra-fun at high water but kind of shallow and boring at lower flows. The river is easily seen from Hwy 145. Eddies are scarce at high water—but who needs'em? Grab some streamside vegetation and hold on! The crux of this run appears about a 1/2 mile above the hamlet of Sawpit, where the gradient steepens for a ways. This is a step up from the rest, and a good test piece for the aspiring class III kayaker. If you are surfing your way through, then you might be ready to step it up a notch. Take out at the Falls Creek confluence and road bridge.

Mellow Bonus: When there is good flow, a beginner run from Falls Creek down to Specie Creek is a safer, and no less scenic bet. There is a very scenic easy class II-III run in Telluride. Put in near the confluence with Bear Creek and take out at the bridge on Mahoney Drive.

Directions: Put in at the bridges at Bilk Crk on Silver Pick Rd (FR 625), turning south off Hwy 145 about 2.5 miles downstream of Keystone. The take-out is on Falls Creek Rd (57.P Road). Another south turn off Hwy 145 is located a little over a mile downstream of Sawpit.

CFS	800<optimal
Class	III
Quality	★★
Gradient	70 fpm
Length	7.3 miles
Season	April to July
Gauge	SM Riv nr Placerville
Put-in	Silverpick Rd
Take-out	Fall Creek Rd

Norwood Canyon and Ledges

Norwood is a wooded canyon where paddlers can take a wilderness journey through the prevalent environmental transition of the San Juan's western slope—a seamless shift from mountainous terrain to high elevation desert. White sandstone bluffs line the canyon rim and abandoned homesteads remind boaters of a time when the river was *the* source of a settlers livelihood. Without water there was no life in this harsh land. The boating itself is very mild.

Horsefly Creek (which has been run from the top of the Uncompahgre Plateau) is a significant river right tributary about halfway into the run. Stop here for a nice side hike that has the added bonus of excellent trout fishing for the wet-line inclined. After Horsefly be on the lookout for a low-head dam that should be run on the far left. First-timers should give the sticky hole a scout, and if portaging should do so discretely (private property).

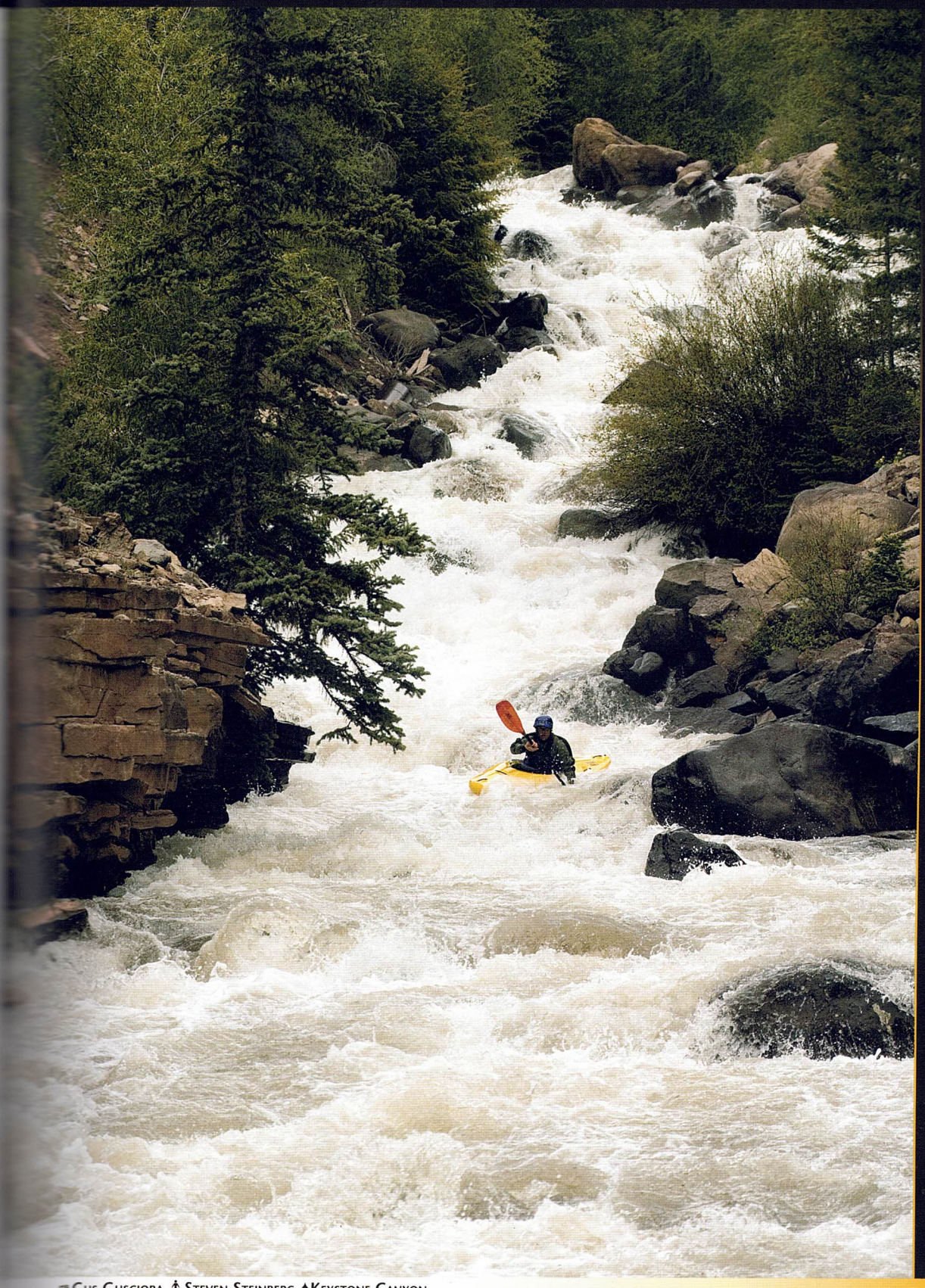
Not long after the dam a dirt road begins to parallel the run on river right. This is the start of the Ledges section, and of a more open, arid valley. Low angle bedrock shelves, similar to the ones found on the Upper Dolores, create a short section of entertaining play waves, especially at higher flows. Expect some local company if the river is flowing strong, and try to make some friends in time for ski season.

Directions: The put-in is at the Hwy 145 bridge, a short ways east of Norwood. The take-out is at the Green Truss Bridge found by taking Rd EE30 north up a steep hill off Hwy 145 just west of the Hwy 141 intersection near Naturita. To just run the Ledges follow Rd BB36 upstream from the river right side of the Green Truss Bridge until it ends. The surf waves are three miles from the bridge.

-Steven Steinberg (all)

CFS	900<optimal
Class	III
Quality	★★★
Gradient	50 fpm
Length	16 miles (variable)
Season	April to July
Gauge	SM Riv nr Placerville
Put-in	145 bridge or BB36 Rd
Take-out	Green Truss Bridge

THE SAN MIGUEL DRAINS THE HIGH PEAKS WHICH SURROUND THE ICONIC MOUNTAIN TOWN OF TELLURIDE—CERTAINLY ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DRAINAGES IN THE STATE.



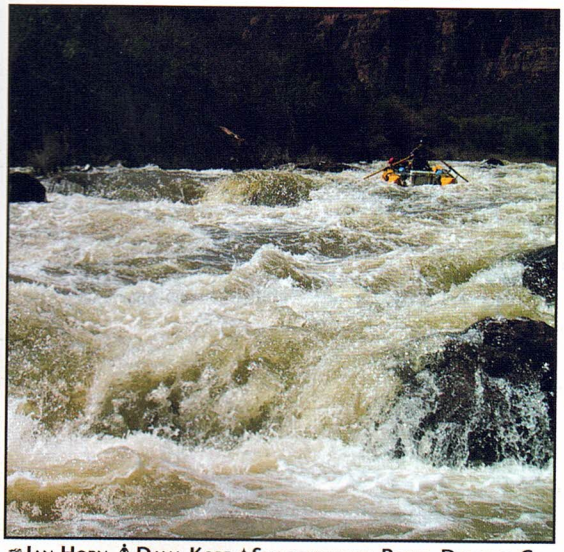
Slickrock Floats

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	500	750	1000	2000
Character	rubber is tougher	small rubber	loaded rubber	secure cargo
S-rock Class	II (III-)	II+ (III)	II+ (III)	III+
D Cyn Class	III- (IV-)	III (IV)	III (IV+)	III+ (IV+)
S-rock Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
D Cyn Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	10 fpm Dolores Canyon, 45 fpm Slickrock Canyon			
Remoteness	high			
Hitchability	not good			
Length	47 miles Dolores Canyon, 50 miles Slickrock Canyon			
Season	May, June (dam)			
Gauge	Dolores blw McPhee Res (Dolores Canyon) or Dolores nr Bedrock (Slickrock Canyon)			
Put-in	Bradfield Launch or Slickrock Launch			
Take-out	Slickrock Launch or Bedrock Launch			

Rio Dolores translates to River of Sorrows, a meaning boaters understand all too well. The Bureau of Reclamation has only 'spilled' water once from McPhee reservoir in the last five years, giving boaters a taste of what used to be before the dam. The backwaters of McPhee also drowned untold treasures of the Anasazi people who used to dwell in the canyon, all to water the desert to grow beans. Ponder that next time you eat a burrito. But lets suppose it was a banner snow year and the river is running. Saddle up cause this is your chance to experience one of the best river trips anywhere.

Dolores Canyon

This section features mostly class II and III water with one solid class IV to spice things up. The scenery is spectacular and you are in a high desert canyon for most of the trip, with pine trees and sandstone getting along together just fine.



Ian Horn Dana Kopf Snaggletooth Rapid, Dolores Canyon

All of the rapids save one are easily boat scouted. There is some play potential but much of the run is a class II cruise through the forested canyon floor. Near mile 27 you will hear the roar of Snaggletooth rapid. Snaggletooth is a long class IV rapid which is worth a scout from the left bank. Signs warn you of this and there is a large pool above the rapid with plenty of places to eddy out. Hike down the road for a look. Near the bottom of the rapid a good deal of current pushes boats toward the tooth rock which has the potential to flip, rip or wrap a raft. It can be avoided on either side, but most opt for going left. Nervous boaters can use the road for a quick portage, but more often than not there is someone wanting to run it more than once. Below Snag there are a couple more class III rapids that keep things interesting before the canyon opens up and you are back at your car.

Most parties will opt for a night or two out since this run is 47 miles long. The camping in this kind of desert country is always fun and there are fine camp spots to be found just about anywhere you want to stop. There is alternate access at mile 19 (Mountain Sheep Point Launch) for those who want to avoid Snaggletooth (or get to it sooner). This stretch is the beginning of a desert floaters paradise where boaters can continue downstream to run Slickrock Canyon and beyond. An ambitious group could even go all the way to Moab for a week long journey with only a four hour round trip shuttle. True addicts can continue all the way through Cataract Canyon. Add up the mileage.

Slickrock Canyon

The first 14 miles of this 50-mile section wander through open ranch land and Little Glen Canyon before entering Slickrock Canyon. You can put in at Gypsum Valley Rec-

Rio Dolores translates to River of Sorrows, a meaning boaters understand all too well. The river has only run once in the last five years, giving boaters a taste of what used to be before the dam.

Chris Hofer Dan Rauler & Moon Dog Slickrock Canyon

reation Site to get into Slickrock Canyon sooner. What rapids there are never get tougher than class III, although some of them can be tight at low water. You are here for the solitude and spectacular sandstone canyon walls against the deep blue sky. The camping is good, although limited, and there are at least two side hikes (Bull Canyon at mile 66 and Spring Canyon at mile 85) that are worthy. For the rock-art aficionado this is a great run, with petroglyphs from a time before time as we know it—some at river level and others hidden in the multiple side canyons. At one point (mile 73) the river goes three miles only to return to within a 1/2 mile of itself. Bored raft passengers can hike over the saddle to meet the boats.

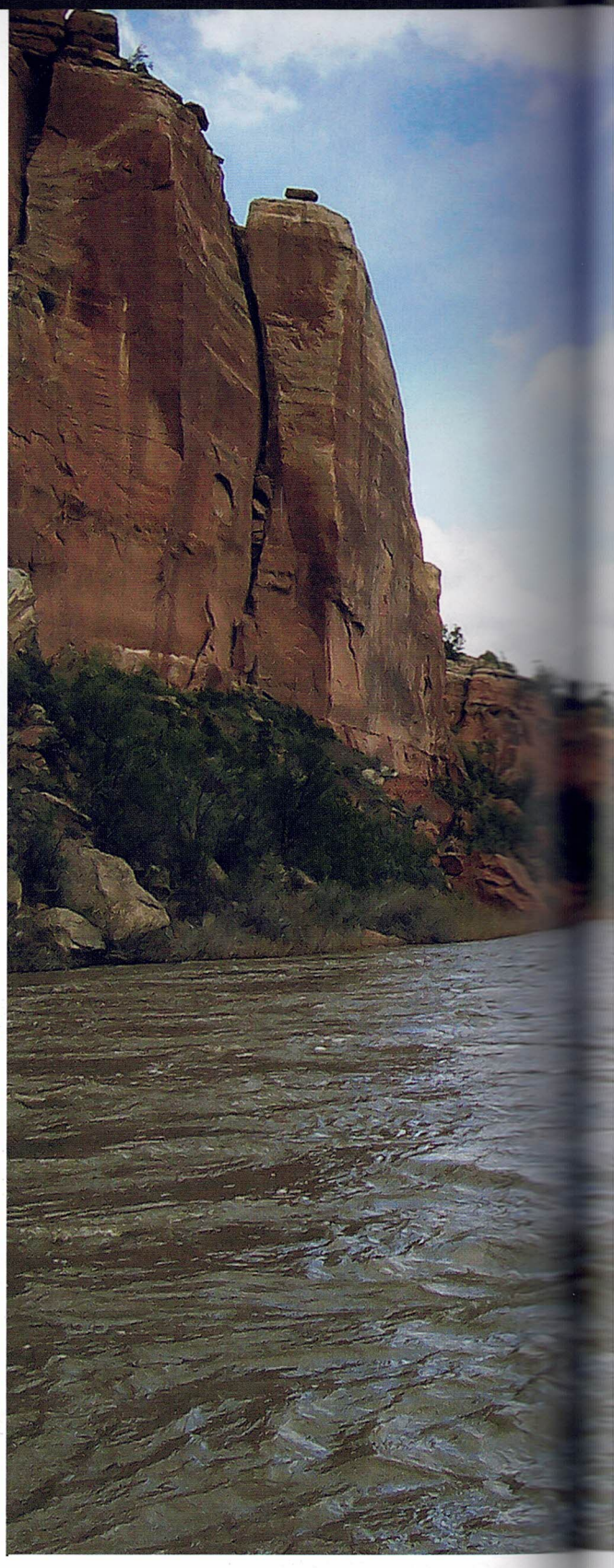
The Bedrock take-out is on river left. You are now in the Paradox Valley, where the river runs perpendicular to the valley. You are also in the middle of nowhere, so hopefully you remembered the keys to your shuttle vehicle and it has gas.

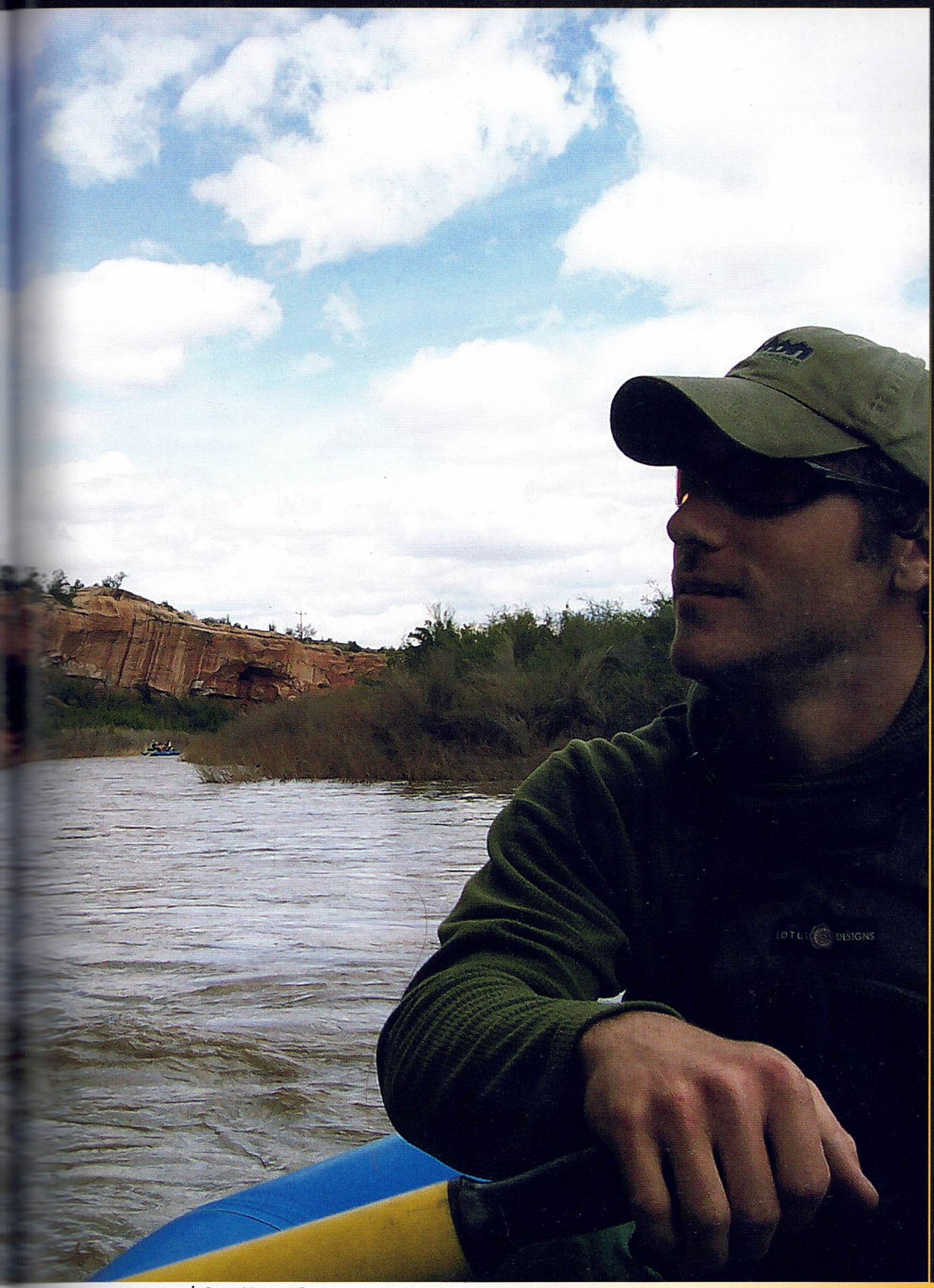
Requirements: Both the Bradfield to Slickrock and the Slickrock to Bedrock sections are managed by the BLM which maintains a site at www.co.blm.gov/sjra/sjdolores.htm. Permits are not required, but there are still firepan and toilet requirements. For all stretches bring an adequate amount of drinking water as the Dolores and many of its tributaries are unfit for consumption. The San Juan Citizens Alliance is attempting to obtain scheduled releases on the Dolores and fight a proposed new dam on a Dolores tributary. Visit www.sanjuancitizens.org/dolores/dolores.shtml to find out more.

-Dana Kopf

Directions

The Bradfield Launch is found east of Cahone off Hwy 666 by taking the Rd R east 3 miles to a right turn on Rd 16. Follow Rd 16 for 1.2 miles to a left turn on Rd S and follow Rd S to the river. This route is well marked. When approaching from the south it is faster to turn directly onto Rd 16 well before reaching Cahone on Hwy 666. The Snaggletooth access is at the Mountain Sheep Point Launch found on Rd 10 north of Cahone on Hwy 666. The Slickrock Launch is off Hwy 141 found by heading further north on Hwy 666. The Slickrock Canyon shortcut put-in is found at the Gypsum Valley Launch on Rd 20R, north off of Hwy 141 at Gypsum Gap. The Bedrock Launch is found by taking Hwy 141 past the Gypsum Gap to Hwy 90 just north of Naturita and by following Hwy 90 to where it crosses the Dolores at Bedrock. The Launch is on river left about 3/4-miles past Bedrock, but it is recommended to ask permission to leave your shuttle rig at the Bedrock Store, as there has been a history of break-ins at the launch.





Alex Hearding Chris Hofer Slickrock oarsmen

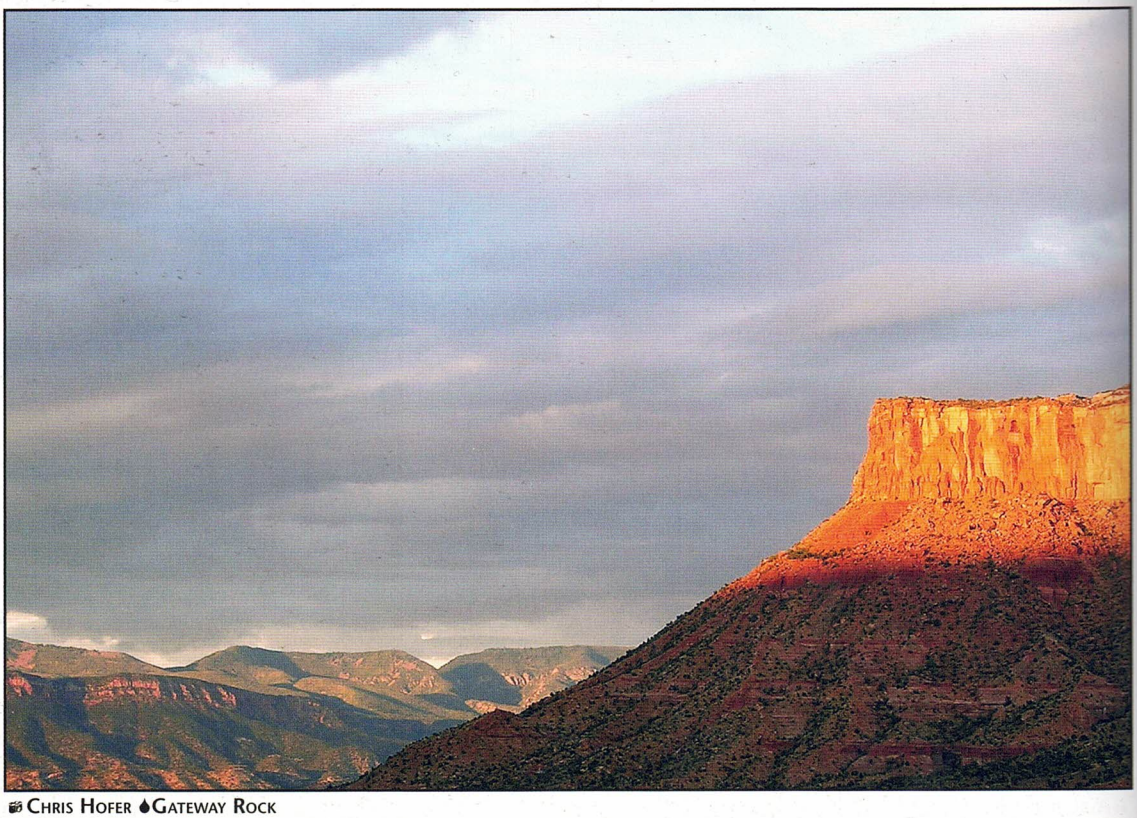
Gateway

CFS	700<min<1000<best
Class	III- (IV+)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	15 fpm
Length	32 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	Dolores nr Bedrock + San Miguel @ Brooks
Put-in	Gateway
Take-out	Dewey Bridge

The Dolores between the Bedrock Launch and the tiny southwestern outpost of Gateway is followed by a road for its entire length and does not offer much in the way of interesting whitewater. The terrain, however, is still beautiful. The river carves a deep sandstone canyon and boaters looking to run all of the Lower Dolores canyons should continue floating through this stretch. It is generally not considered a worthy section on its own unless you are a local but shortly downstream of Gateway, the river enters its final sandstone canyon. The Gateway Canyon is an amazingly scenic and worthy chasm, offering a true taste of red rock wilderness and some exciting technical paddling before the Delores merges with the mighty Colorado just over the border in Utah.

It has been said that the canyons of the Dolores River cloaked the getaway of none other than Butch Cassidy and his Wild Bunch after they made out with over $10,000 in stolen cash from the San Miguel Valley Bank in Telluride. As a less-formal member of the hangouts connected by the Outlaw Trail, the Dolores River hides many secrets and many secret side canyons for you to explore. Truly outlaw country—and you can feel like one too as you cross the Utah border (presumably to safety if you are pretending to be an outlaw) around eight miles in and navigate Stateline, a solid class IV rapid with a hair line for kayakers river left. The raft line and scout are both river right. Soon after Stateline is Beaver Creek Falls, a technical rock garden that will trip up rafts at lower flows, and requires an early exit, above the horizon line, if you wish to scout. Most of the other drops on the run can be swum by any outlaw worth their weight in stolen gold, so even the novice paddler should be fine. A free permit is required to run this stretch, but a quick phone call to the Moab BLM office at (435) 259-7012 between 8 a.m. and noon Monday through Friday should do the trick. For more information on the permit system check out the Moab Field Office website at www.blm.gov/utah/moab/rec-frame.html.

Directions: The Gateway Launch is on Hwy 141 just south of Gateway the town. The take-out is at Dewey Bridge, found off Hwy 128 in Utah. If it is free of snow the best and most scenic route to the Dewey Bridge is through the La Sal Loop, found by taking the State Line (Gateway) Rd west from Gateway until it turns into FR 207 and then right (north) onto Castleton Rd which connects with Hwy 128 south of the bridge.

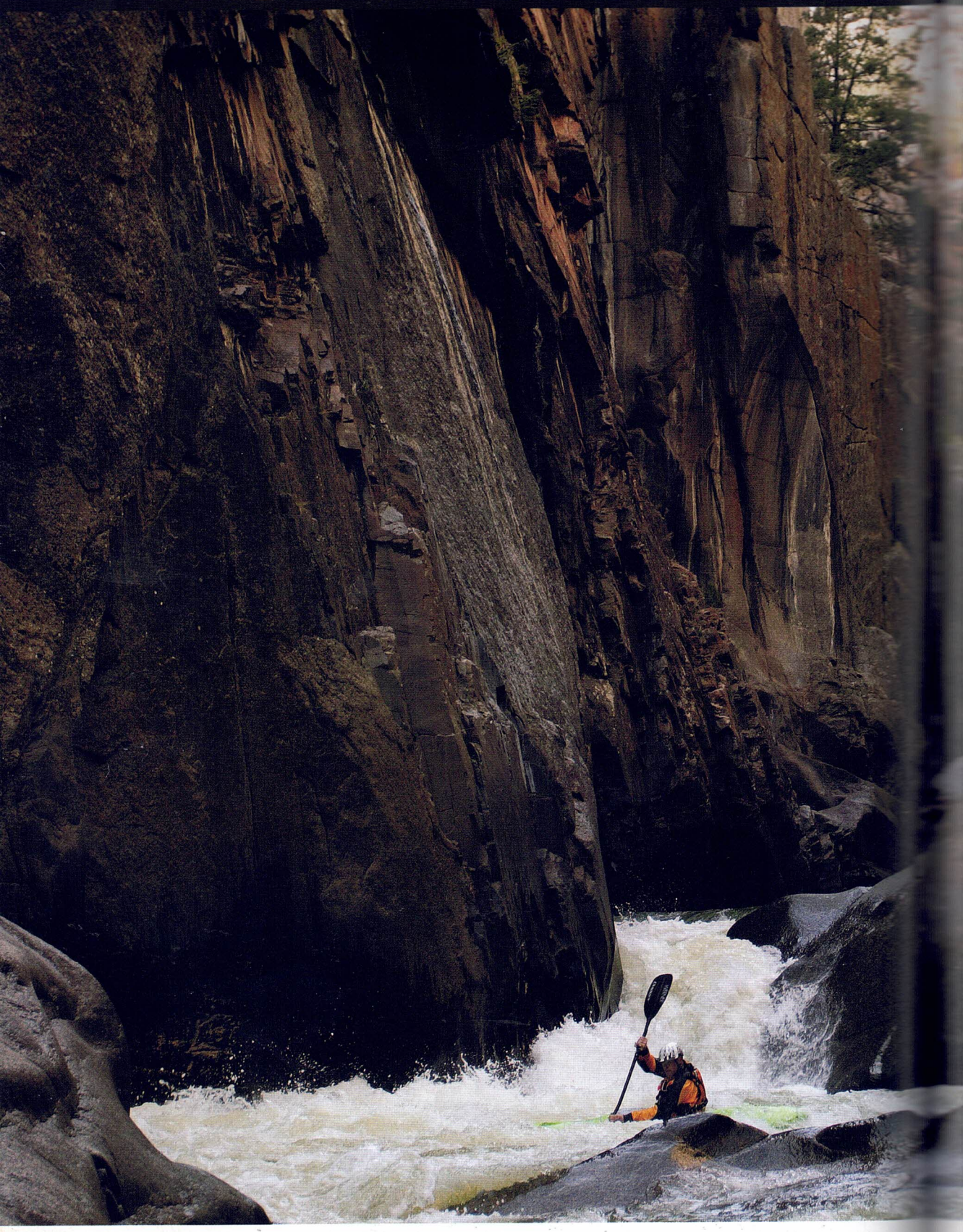


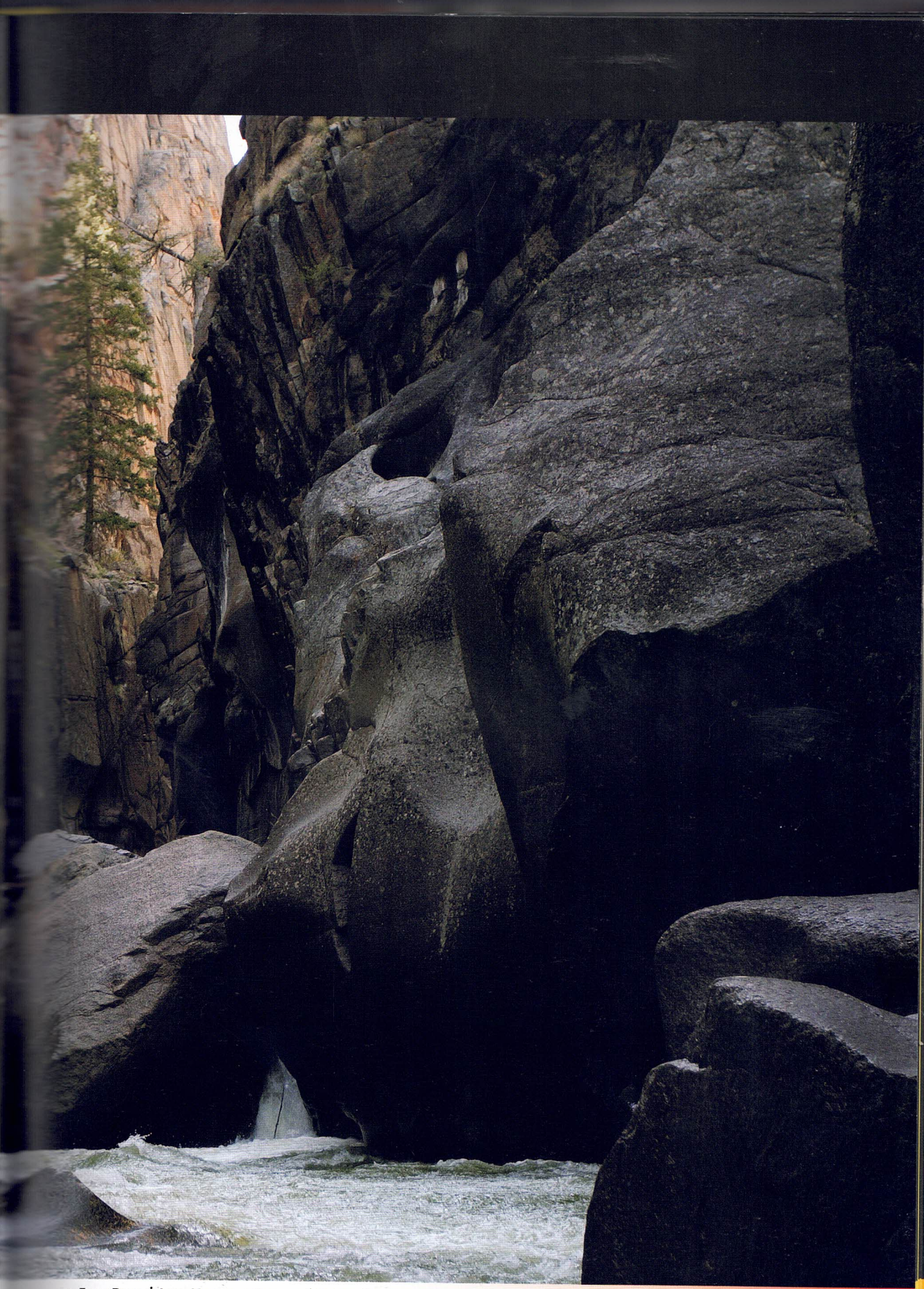
Chris Hofer ♦Gateway Rock

"We said there warn't no home like a raft, afterall. Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft."

-Mark Twain

Brett Hochmuth/eagleeyephotos.com





Evan Ross Luke Hanson Swollen Member, Pandoras Box

Los Pinos

Visual CFS	500<optimal<1000
Class	V (NRs, Ps)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	115 fpm, 420 crux
Length	19.5 miles plus hike
Season	late May
Gauge	Vallecito @ 700 (barometer)
Put-in	Rio Grande Res
Take-out	Vallecito Reservoir

Flowing nearly parallel to Vallecito it's a wonder that there hasn't been more exploration of the Los Pinos. The run barrels down the south face of the Weminuche Wilderness for 28 miles, squeezing through a number of granite gorges before dropping into Vallecito Reservoir. The length and true remoteness is what makes the Los Pinos special. Combined with the seven-mile hike over Weminunche Pass (10,630 feet) the run is one of the only true expedition paddling trips in Colorado—since even brutal places like the Black Canyon can be run in a day. Not The Pines.

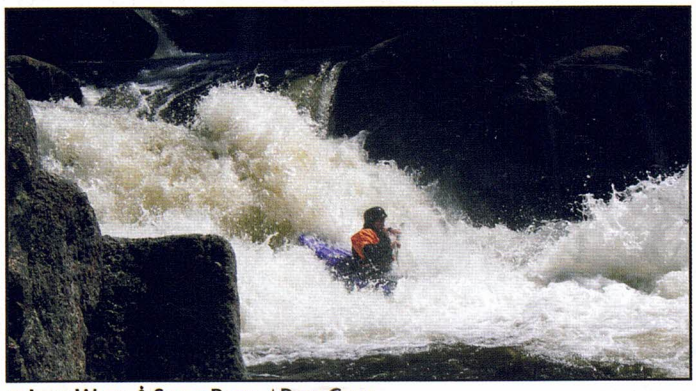
Nick Wigston and company attempted the run in the summer of 2006. Despite being highly experienced expedition paddlers, the team ran into troubles early, and their tales of woe hint at the depth of the undertaking.

"We failed miserably. Didn't start hiking until 3:00 pm. Didn't make it to our gear drop (packed in by horses from the bottom), lost the trail at night, spent the night huddled around a fire on the side of a mountain at about 10,000 feet. At dawn we hiked down and found our gear, hiked up to our boats (which was a long ass way), camped. Next day hiked back out to the truck. Overall we hiked for 35 miles, ran two miles of a flatwater stream, and bagged one first D on Weminuche Creek. Now I can hardly walk."

Scott Baker, John Wade, and Dan Steaves had a much better time one week earlier. As the only three to have successfully completed the run from top-to-bottom in recent years, John took the liberty of filling me in on what they experienced. The following is transcribed from his notes, but given the lack of numerous descents, expect to be on your own once you make the trek over the pass. Plan on one day of hiking, and two days of paddling—ideally with the aide of horses and/or a shuttle bunny.

Although its possible to hike up the Los Pinos trail from the bottom, or to just run the lower roadside run into the reservoir, paddlers looking for an adventure will want to endure the brutally long shuttle by putting in on the north side of Weminuche Pass, near Rio Grande Reservoir. Snow may block the pass, so plan to hit the run after peak—finding a balance between runnable levels and manageable access. Once over the pass (1230' elevation gain from the reservoir) the run starts out slow and shallow. Camp near the first gorge, which is mostly unrunnable.

Rincon La Osa will double the flow in the headwaters, and make the next 4.5-mile cruise more enjoyable. The Flats contain some good class IV drops hidden in the trees, including the 8' B-Squared, and 15' Cali Slide. Cowboy Camp is at the start of the second gorge. Vallecito Simulator is the unrun three-tiered falls that drops into the most gorged section of the run. Expect portages, and look for the Pope Creek landmark. The runout of this steep section is one of the highlights of the trip. Stout rapids, including Toothpick, Phat Camp, and Hero, stack up between portages. Flint Creek offers good camping opportunities, and will once again nearly double the flow.

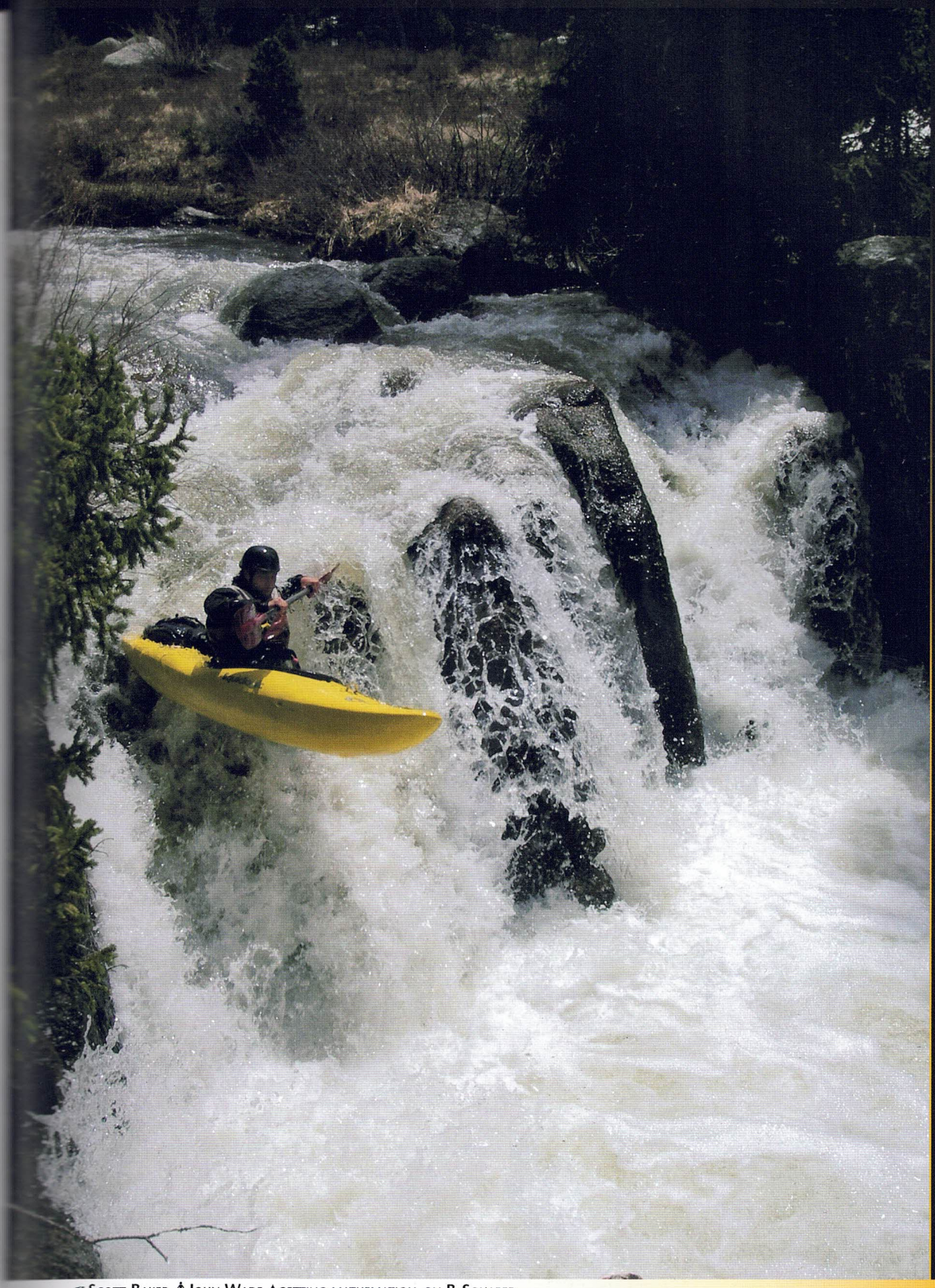


JOHN WADE 🚶 SCOTT BAKER ♦PHAT CAMP

Two hours of flatwater divide the second gorge from the third. The class V, 200 fpm gorge lasts for two miles, and the pushy whitewater make this section one to look forward too. The gorge ends at the confluence with Lake Creek, and the added flow will make the next nine miles of class III more enjoyable. Don't ungear, because the final mile above Vallecito Reservoir contains good class IV, and the bottom of this run can be shuttled for a class III/IV day stretch. Use FR 602 for access.

Weminuche Pass Access: Start at the Thirty Mile CG at the bottom of Rio Grande Reservoir, paddle across the lake and hike up TR 818. Once over the saddle the trail becomes TR 523, which parallels the river for the duration of the run. Hiking up from the take-out to about Flint Creek still accesses most of the action, and avoids the long shuttle. Horses are recommended, if affordable.

Directions: Middle Mountain CG can be used as a take-out if you get permission, and is found near the intersection of FR 602 and FR 603 along the east shore of Vallecito Reservoir. To reach the put-in, drive south on Hwy 160, east on Hwy 160 over Wolf Creek Pass, north on Hwy 149 at South Fork, then west on FR 520 to Thirtymile CG. It's 3.5 hours one-way, but doesn't require 4WD.



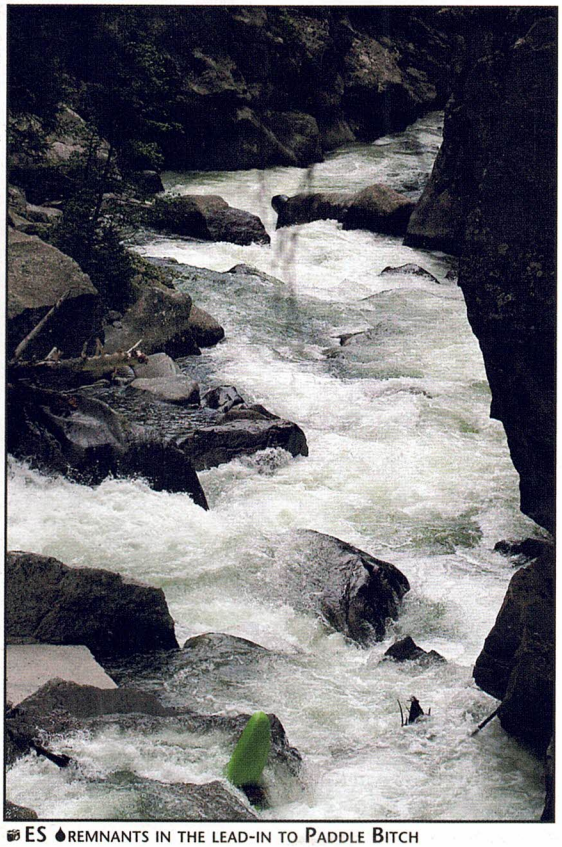
Combined with the seven-mile hike over Weminunche Pass (10,630 feet) the run is one of the only true expedition paddling trips in Colorado. Plan on three days to complete the run in style.

Scott Baker 🚶 John Wade 💧 getting mathematical on B-Squared

Vallecito Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	156	255	342	505
Gauge at Run	1.7′	2.0′	2.2′	2.5′
Character	foreplay	orgasmic	threesome	scary pillow fight
Class	V	V+	V+	V+
Quality	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	245 fpm			
Remoteness	committing, but close to civilization			
Hitchability	hike the shuttle			
Length	1 mile			
Season	maybe late March or April, best May to early July, and with heavy rain			
Gauge	Visual foot gauge at CG, or Vallecito near Bayfield			
Put-in	where the trail meets the river			
Take-out	Vallecito Campground			

"For the expert creek-paddler, Vallecito Creek offers the best mile of boating in the state of Colorado," claimed CRC2. Almost a decade later Colorado creekers agree almost unanimously that there isn't a single mile of whitewater that is as quality. Tyler Williams' *Whitewater Classics* ranks it among the top 50 runs of North America. If there is to ever be a top 10 creeks of the US, Vallecito Creek would make the cut along with the likes of the Green, Little White Salmon, Big Timber, and the Embudo. It's that good.



ES ♦REMNANTS IN THE LEAD-IN TO PADDLE BITCH

Enough praise. The walls are smooth granite, over a hundred feet deep, and offer almost zero escape routes (at least not with a boat). Paddlers that are not solid class V will get destroyed, especially at higher flows, and even stout paddlers have found themselves in bad situations. The water is cold, portaging is usually not an option and scouting is nearly impossible. I can still remember my virgin run down. After nearly 20 minutes of standing on the point of a rock no wider than my own two feet (patiently awaiting directions from the others scouting downstream), I looked over at the older and much more experienced team Eskimo paddler standing next to me.

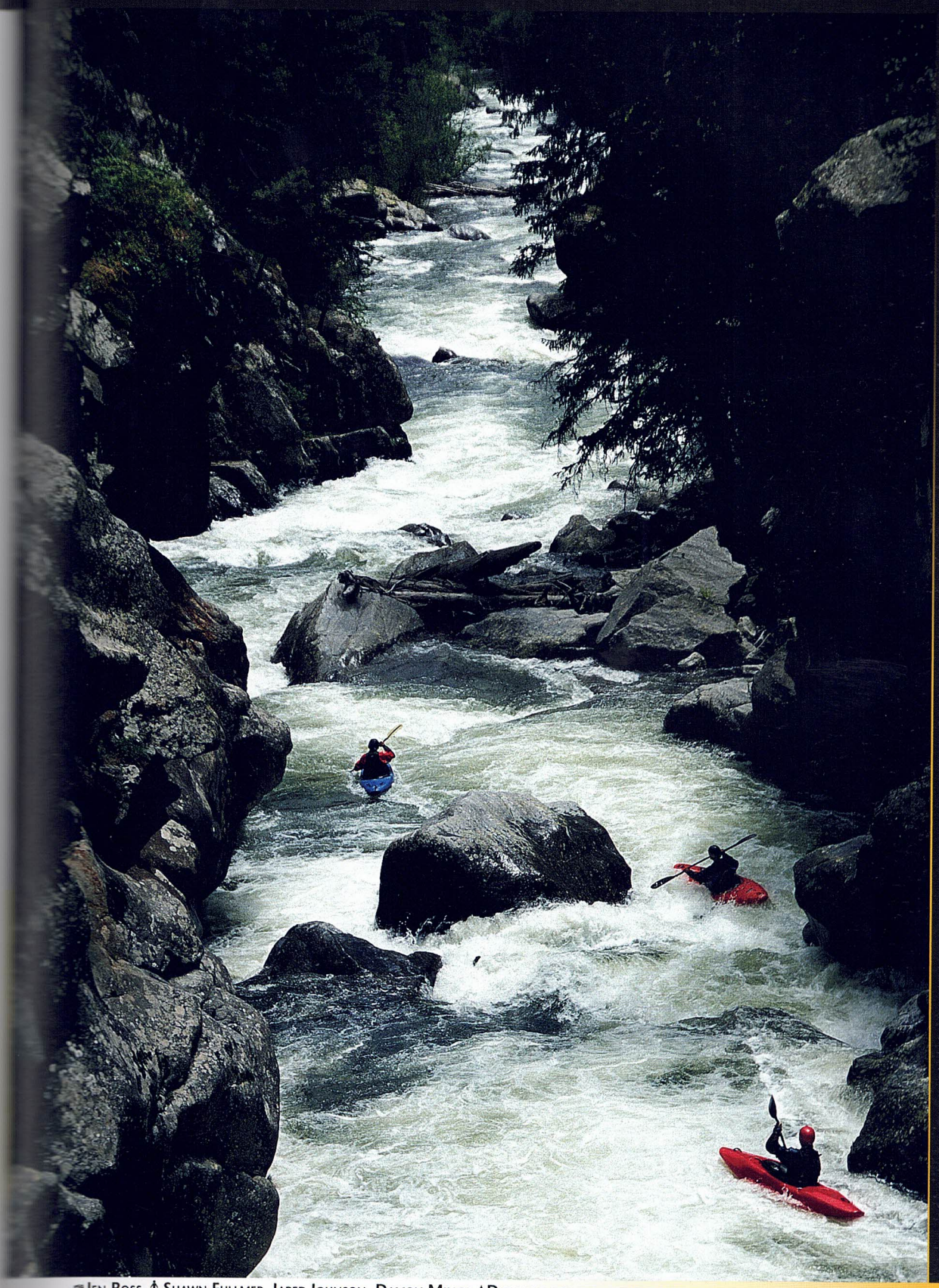
"What do you think?"

"Back home we have a rule that after scouting for more than 15 minutes we automatically portage," he said in a deep southern accent. "But it doesn't really look like we have that option here."

The action starts with the 18′ Entrance Falls a mere 100 yards below the put-in. Most opt to run it blind, whether by peer pressure or by the level preventing a scout on the river left side. Charge off of it angling right with a delayed boof, and you'll end up in a river right eddy at a place that some have described as magical, spiritual and life-altering. Smiles run high. Trash Can is just below, with an easy scout showing you where to boof to avoid the most rocks. The river goes blind here, but stick to the main flow around the corner and you will be fine at any reasonable level. The drops vary in difficulty and size below this, but none of the top 2/3 of the run is any tougher than Entrance Falls. A guide is highly recommended on any trip at any level.

Fuzzy Little Bunny, a narrow 12'er that lands in a highly aerated slot, marks the psychological halfway

POSSIBLY THE BEST MILE OF PADDLING FOR THE EXPERT CREEK BOATER IN THIS ENTIRE GUIDEBOOK. CLEAR WATER POURING OVER CHISELED GRANITE IN AN UNBELIEVABLY BEAUTIFUL GORGE.



JEN ROSS SHAWN FULLMER, JARED JOHNSON, DAMON MILLER DURANGO POSSE ROUTING THROUGH

point of the run. Either yell "Fuzzy Little Bunny!" or hike up and run it again, this time yelling it so everyone can hear you. This war cry is mandatory.

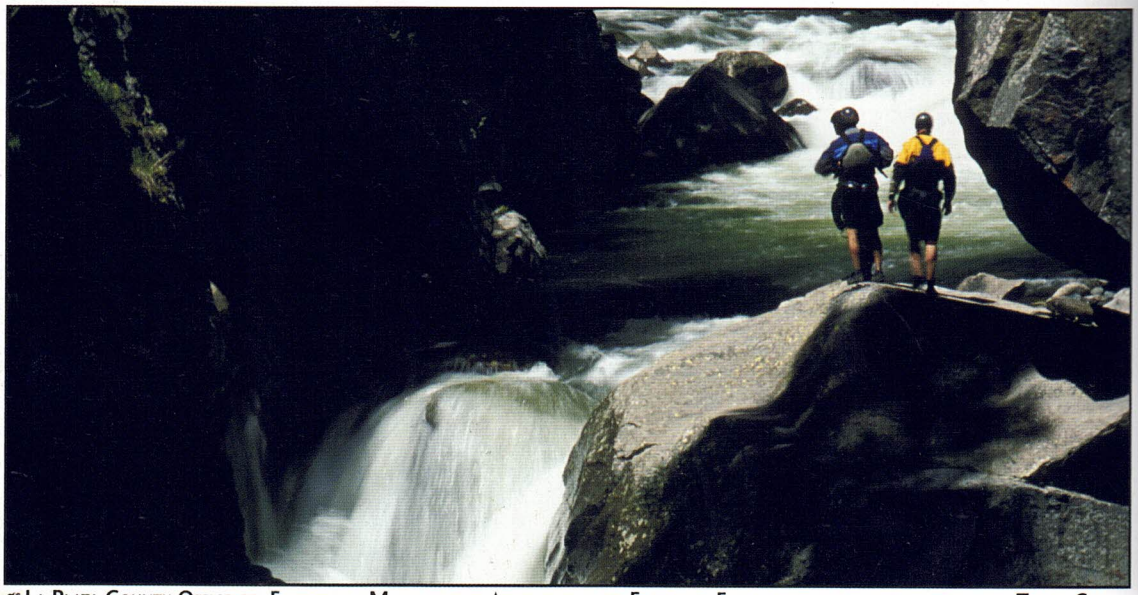
Paddle Bitch is a little ways below this, with a triple hole combo and an overhanging phallic rock on the right side. More worrisome than the pornographic granite is that the top of this drop is the scouting point for No Way Out, the final major rapid of the run. If the level is medium or high, then run left of the large rock splitting the current, if lower run right. It's a good idea to pre-scout this drop from the gorge rim.

Salvation Pool is the regrouping point below. Finish Line requires a boof to avoid the sticky hole, and to escape the canyon walls. Beers at the take-out, stories, and someone owes Ice Cream.

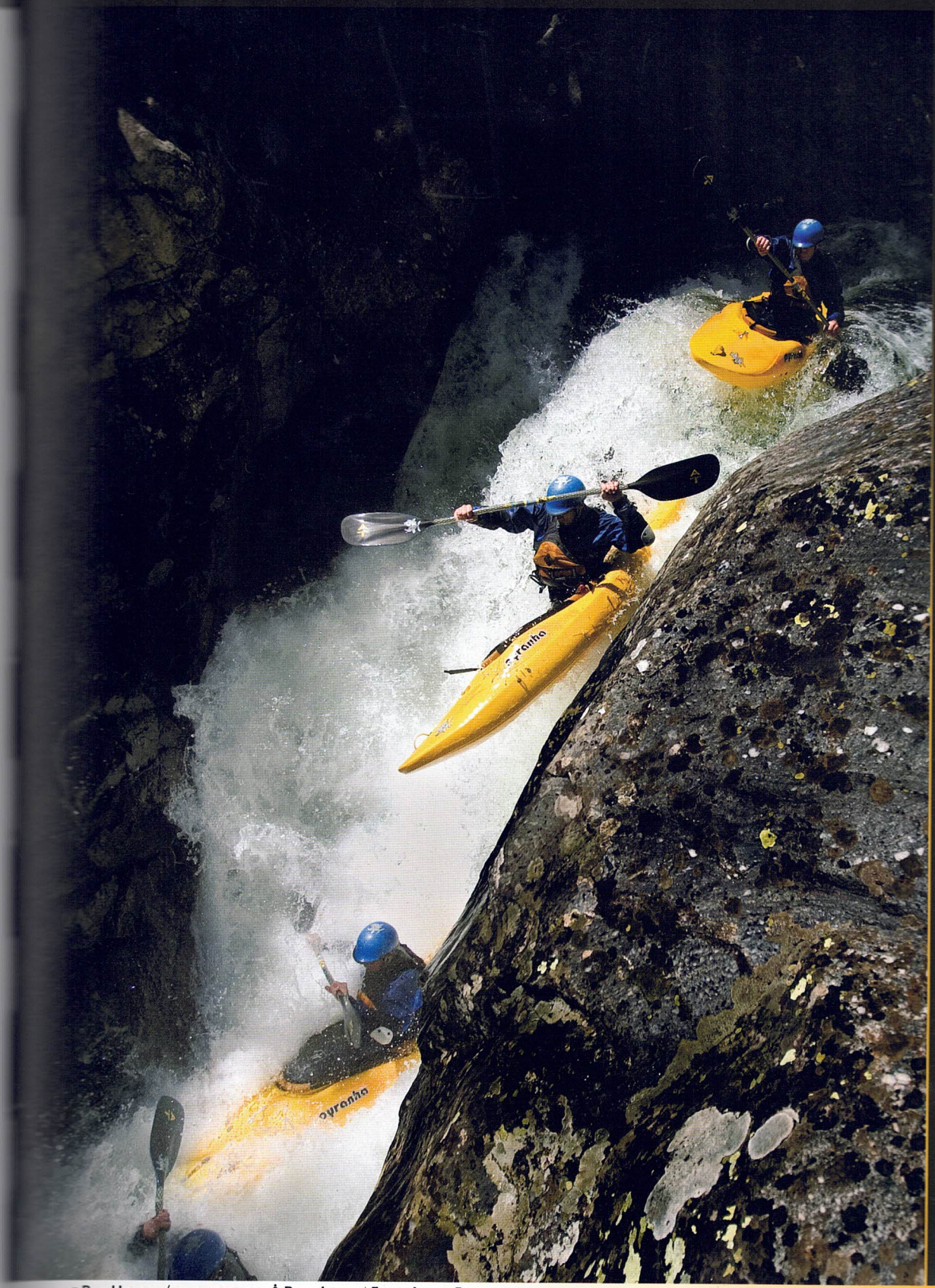
Gauge: The gauge has been continuously changing over the last two years, and the current gauge is poorly placed in a pile of sand. Thus, its time to start learning the CFS levels. As a side note, the rumored highest descent of Vallecito would be the equivalent of 1100 cfs.

Directions

From downtown Durango, take Florida Rd (pronounced Floor-reet-tah) east, until it becomes 240 Rd and meets up with the Florida River. Cross the river and follow the signs to the right towards Vallecito, and then turn left to drive Vallecito Rd (561) up the west side of the reservoir. Or take Vallecito Rd north from Bayfield. Drive until you get to Vallecito Campground, and park at the day use area. The trailhead (TR 529) is at the north end. A one mile hike will take you over a granite rock and back down to river level, where you will put in. Scout the bottom drop at the most exposed point on the hike up (when the cliff is directly next to the trail on the right, and a cliff wall is on the left). Wood can and does collect here.



La Plata County Office of Emergency Management ♦the lead-in to Entrance Falls, river right scout eddy, and Trash Can
Jared Johnson Shawn Fullmer, Damon Miller ♦scouting Fuzzy Little Bunny



Durango • Vallecito Creek

Ben Horton/benhorton.biz Billy Jones Fuzzy Little Bunny

Falls, Miller & La Plata Crk

Falls Creek

This creek has enough water in it when Vallecito is at 3.0 feet (875 cfs) or higher, so it doesn't run often. When it's flowing, this is an adrenaline packed run. The run has two personalities—the upper portion is all bedrock granite with large, relatively smooth slides. This first bedrock portion continues down to just below Ferris Buellers Day Off. We all skipped class and even talked the professor into canceling his class to run the creek with us, so accordingly we named the best rapid after the skipping schoolmaster.

After Bueller there are a couple more nice bedrock drops and then the character changes from bedrock slides into something resembling Front Range mank. In the middle of the run is a 50 foot waterfall (Edward Runy) that will reduce your total number of vertebrae in half should you decide to run it. Most drops are big with little or no eddies, so it is advisable to pre-scout everything.

Directions: It's the creek you walk over on your way up Vallecito. To get to the creek park at the Vallecito CG main parking lot. Face looking straight up Vallecito, this is 12 o'clock, start hiking in the direction of 10 o'clock for about two miles, straight up hill. When you hear something that sounds like ten' waves crashing against the shoreline, you're close.

-Jared Johnson

CFS	150<optimal<300
Class	V+
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	500 fpm
Length	1.5 miles
Season	Vallecito peak
Gauge	visual or Vallecito @ 875 cfs
Riv Access	Vallecito CG

Miller Creek

If it is peak run-off in a good water year (100% or better snowpack) in the San Juans, and you're in the mood to donate plastic and probably a little blood, stop by Miller Creek on your way up to Vallecito. Miller Campground (Lemon Reservoir) sits at the base of this steep, manky, bedrock waterfall and slide-filled run. If the creek looks bank full (60+ cfs) then hike a mile upstream, or as far as looks fun to you.

Miller has two distinct feels. The upper half contains a set of falls with no single drop over 10 feet. There are over ten drops winding thru intermittent bedrock. The lower half is one big fast slide, mixed with a few verts. In the top half, just below a 15' slide we use as the put-in, lies the best drop of the run, Ruby Red Falls. Other named drops in order include the Z-Mank, Last Chance, Five-Dollar Falls. I have agreed to give the first person to run this falls a framed five-dollar bill that I found while scouting this drop. Last is the Saucy Sluice and the final mank exiting a culvert, Lobster Pot. Watch for wood and enjoy my backyard run.

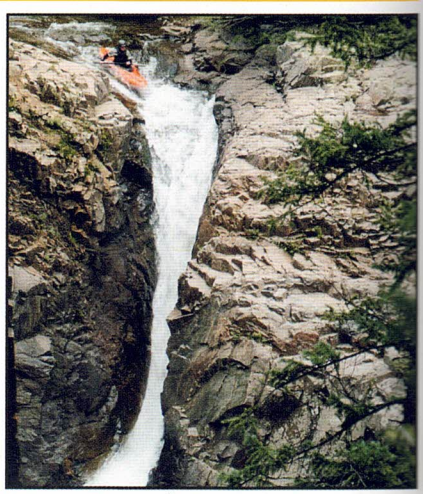
CFS	60<min
Class	V
Quality	★★
Gradient	450 fpm
Length	1 mile
Season	peak
Gauge	visual
Put-in	one mile up the trail
Take-out	Miller CG

Directions: Find Miller Campground along Lemon Reservoir Rd 244. Hike up the creek from here.

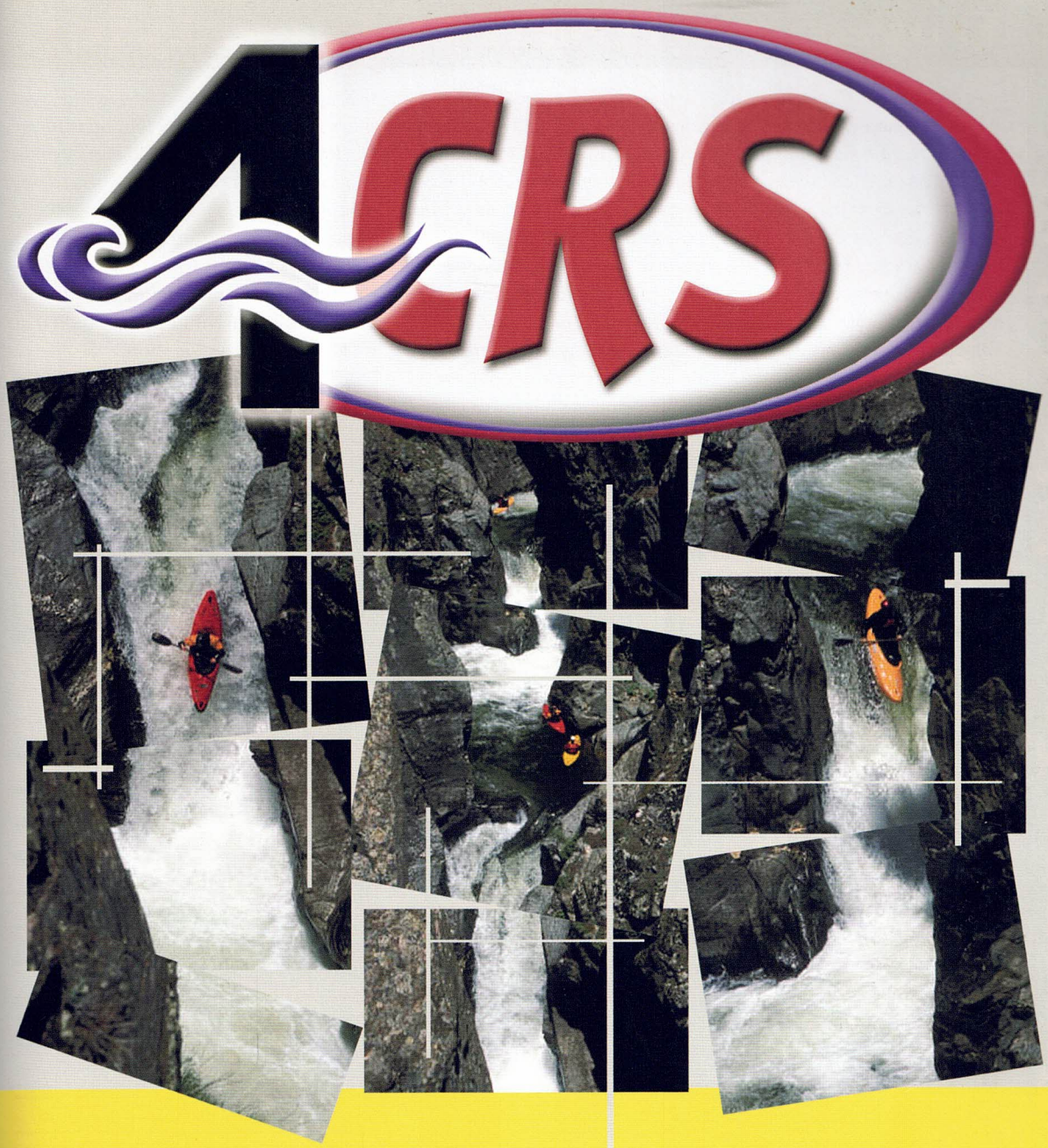
-Steve Ward

La Plata Falls

Spanish for silver, the La Plata is a beautiful river outside of Durango. Once an integral part of the Animas-La Plata dam project, the La Plata was spared inclusion in this endeavor, but the ground has already been broken to divert water from the Animas. A symbol for all that is wasteful and wrong-headed about federal water policy, the A-LP was met with strong opposition. Unfortunately these protests fell on deaf ears and the project was pushed through due to the symbolic fulfillment of century old Ute Tribe water claims. These claims should be honored, however much of the stored water will be available to the highest bidder. Do we really need another big, expensive dam that will deplete a wild river, flood a wildlife corridor and feed massive residential development in an otherwise thriving natural eco-system? No. Fight for our free flowing rivers and oh yeah, there's a runnable waterfall on the La Plata, visible from 124 Rd north off of Hwy 160 west of Durango.



Michael Barton Nate Klema Tight squeeze



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Nestled in an arid valley to the south of the rugged Weminuche Wilderness, the town of yesteryear featured an odd mix of western culture, and those that happened to be amazingly good at outdoor sports. The individuals weren't afraid to rock the North Face ski jacket with the cowboy hat, while driving the Dodge Diesel to the former Purgatory Ski Resort. The whitewater scene was full of heavy-hitters, with a multitude of well-known instructors and a very strong slalom scene, which at the time, may have been the best in the country. In 1996 Meltdown Madness was released, featuring a handful of local derelicts bombing down Vallecito. I idolized the crew that my dad referred to as, "a bunch of crazies."

The scene has changed. Despite the entrepreneurial spirit that created businesses like Bomber Gear, the center of the kayaking world seems to have moved-on, and many of the companies are now gone. Although the freestyle scene was alive here before the rest of Colorado, the Animas River Days have turned a shoulder to the pros and returned to the roots of a locals-only type event—and that seems to suit the local paddlers just fine. Although Durango has become a full-fledged small city, complete with traffic jams and concerts, the place is home to a number of amazing paddlers that often remain in the underground world of the kayaking scene. A visit here will unmask these characters that can be found throwing huge aerials in Corner Pocket, soloing Pandoras in late October, or maybe the high school creeker that just said goodbye to his homecoming sweetheart to go run 1st Gorge Lime. A visit here is to whitewater what a roadtrip to Moab is for mountain biking—a soul-searching adventure into the sport that we love, and always too short.

Bakers Bridge to 32nd Street Park

Although scenic, the Animas River offers little quality whitewater in the 16 miles between the Pandoras Box take-out and the edge of Durango. Predominately class I-II, this is a mellow float at higher flows and lake-like flat at lower flows. Be heads-up for strainers, but the lack of gradient will give beginners plenty of time to negotiate any less-than-desirable obstructions. I recommend breaking up the run six miles from the top, at the Trimble Lane bridge—not far from Trimble Hot Springs.

Directions: Take out at 32nd Street Park in Durango. Take Hwy 550 north about 10-miles and turn right onto Timber Lane and continue to the bridge across the Animas to put in for the ten-mile lower, or take out for the six-mile upper. Continue north on Hwy 550, and turn right on CR 250, and continue to Bakers Bridge to put in.

CFS	500<min<1000<best
Class	I+
Quality	★★
Gradient	15 fpm
Length	16 miles
Season	April to September
Gauge	Animas @ Durango
Put-in	Bakers Bridge
Take-out	32nd Street Park

32nd Street to Smelter

Quality whitewater can be found in downtown Durango. Class III boulder gardens create the typical character at normal levels, and the action builds gradually with some mellow II+ stuff and an island. Take the right channel for the better play. The crux of the run comes a short ways later, where paddlers need to be able to paddle around the abutments of the railroad bridge, and shortly thereafter the Main Street bridge. Paddlers looking for action will enjoy this section the most.

After this the river straightens, offers good play, and a good river access point at City Park on river left. This is a take-out for the upper, or put-in for freestylers running through Smelter.

Smelter is a long and wide straightaway downstream and can be scouted on river left at the lip for unsure beginners. Its class IV- with a huge haystack followed by funny water, so take a glance at the crux from the lip. This is the crux of the class III run, and will be the most likely portage for beginners paddling the entire length of the Durango Town runs.

Directions: From Hwy 550 through town, turn right on 32nd St (just past City Market), cross the bridge, turn left, and park. Put in here. Take out at City Park by turning east on 9th from Hwy 550, and then right onto Rosa Ave.

CFS	500<min<1000<best
Class	III<3000<IV-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	25 fpm
Length	3 miles
Season	year round, no ice
Gauge	Animas @ Durango
Put-in	32nd St
Take-out	Smelter

Katie Selby Jed Selby Corner Pocket, Smelter Park

A visit here is to whitewater what a roadtrip to Moab is for Mountain Biking—a soul-searching adventure into the sport that we love, and though filled with adventure it's always too short.

Katie Selby Jed Selby Corner Pocket clean blunt, Smelter Park

Smelter Park

Formerly Smelter Rapid, this boulder garden is always getting a little bit of a face-lift to keep the freestyle features kicking. The rapid gets a III+ big water feel at high flow, but it isn't tough. Corner Pocket is the feature of note here, offering up sweet aerial wave moves at levels over 1000 cfs. It really is sick. Eddy access can be tricky at some levels. It's fantastic for park-and-play mode, especially the afternoon of a Vallecito trip.

At lower levels plan on playing the main feature, found at the bottom of the island's right channel. It's not worth a long drive, but it keeps the in-town paddling options going much longer than the natural freestyle season. I've literally paddled Smelter during Christmas week.

Watch out for the hole below Corner Pocket on river right. It gets trashy at flows above 3000 cfs, and is responsible for a couple of raft flips and kayaker window shades.

Directions: From the intersection of Hwy 550 and Hwy 160, drive south on Hwy 160 and turn right at the next intersection. The wastewater treatment plant is visible from the highway. A train engine is next to the large parking area. This is the main staging area for freestylers and slalom racers (there is usually a course here). Hike upstream to the top of Smelter.

CFS	500<min 1500<main hole<2500 1000<Corner Pocket
Class	III<2500<IV-
Eddy	variable
Quality	★★★★
Season	year round, no ice
Gauge	Animas @ Durango
Riv Access	Gateway Park

Santa Rita & Big Kahuna

This isn't much of a section, but rather the freestyle features that dot the class III landscape between the Whitewater Park and Four Corners River Sports, and the beginner whitewater on the south side of town.

First up, the Santa Rita hole on river right, practically under the Hwy 550 bridge. It's a sticky little beast at lower levels, and unfortunately shallow—though the action is great for the experienced hole rider. The best levels are above 2000 cfs and it forms better after peak. Stick to surfer left for the deep flow and flushy corner.

Big Kahuna is a sleepy green wave that comes to life at levels from 800 to 1500 cfs. Located in the Sawmill section, Kahuna has earned the most street credit for hitting big wave moves. The Sawmill set is the best freestyle arena once flows cross over 4000 cfs. When it crosses over 7000 cfs the entire local kayaking community will be hanging out here, ignoring the grade A class V options because the play is so good. Well, maybe not all of them.

Kayakers looking for longer class III action, and those wanting to run all of the sections through town in sequence can continue downstream to the new bridge behind the Wal-Mart on river left (the same side as the Hwy at this point). The Pinball Rock Garden is the easy rapid of note here, and this option adds an extra two-miles of paddling, although slightly less scenic than upstream.

Directions: Kayak downstream of Smelter Park to reach Santa Rita, and hike back up if exercising the park-and-play option. Or park behind Four Corners River Sports off the Hwy 550/160 frontage road to the east for alternative river access, and Big Kahuna park-and-play. The lowest take-out for the Durango town section is found west of Hwy 550/160, behind the Super Wal-Mart.

CFS	800<best
Class	III (IV- freestyle)
Quality	★★★★★ (freestyle)
Gradient	25 fpm
Length	2.4 miles
Season	year round, no ice
Gauge	Animas @ Durango
Put-in	Gateway Park
Take-out	Super Wal-Mart

Nick Hinds ♦Corner Pocket back blunt

Tom Fernandez Luke Hanson Santa Rita Hole

Farmington Park

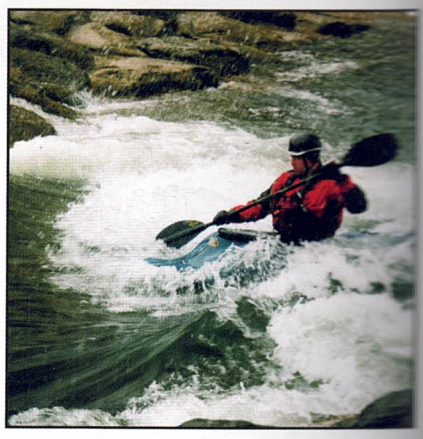
Farmington New Mexico would seem an unlikely place for a whitewater park, but a section of the Animas River above the confluence with the San Juan has been modified to create two features. Although not worth a very long drive, the features offer a little surf to the paddler that ends up in the Farmington area. While a little less than an hour's drive will take you to Durango's more serious and significant play boating scene, the warmer water, lack of a crowded eddy and more mellow atmosphere at Farmington can be a welcome opportunity. At lower water levels it can also be a good place to take a beginner to learn the basics.

The upper of the two features can be surfed at very low water levels, and it becomes mellower the lower it gets. It is a shallow hole, so getting vertical ends can be difficult, if not impossible at lower levels. This feature washes out as the level rises, becoming a fast flushy wave at around 1000 cfs. The feature disappears as the water level increases. The ever-changing shape of the rock bar above this feature can affect the hole for better or worse.

As the water rises and the upper feature becomes less interesting, the lower hole starts to become fun. At less than 1000 cfs the lower wave is slow and not very retentive, but as the water level rises so does this features spirit. A boulder was moved in the winter of '06 - '07 that dramatically changed this hole at high water. At 2700 to 3600, and possibly higher levels the center of this mostly river wide feature becomes extremely sticky and difficult to get out of. Unless this boulder is moved, or the feature changes naturally, boaters should take a careful look at the width and length of the recirculation before getting in.

If you are lucky enough to be in the area at very high water levels the lower feature becomes a massive river wide hole that might even bring the Durango crowd down from their Shangri La. Most of the time this play park won't be a destination for the play-hungry boater, but it can be a good place for a beginner or a place to get wet if passing through northern New Mexico.

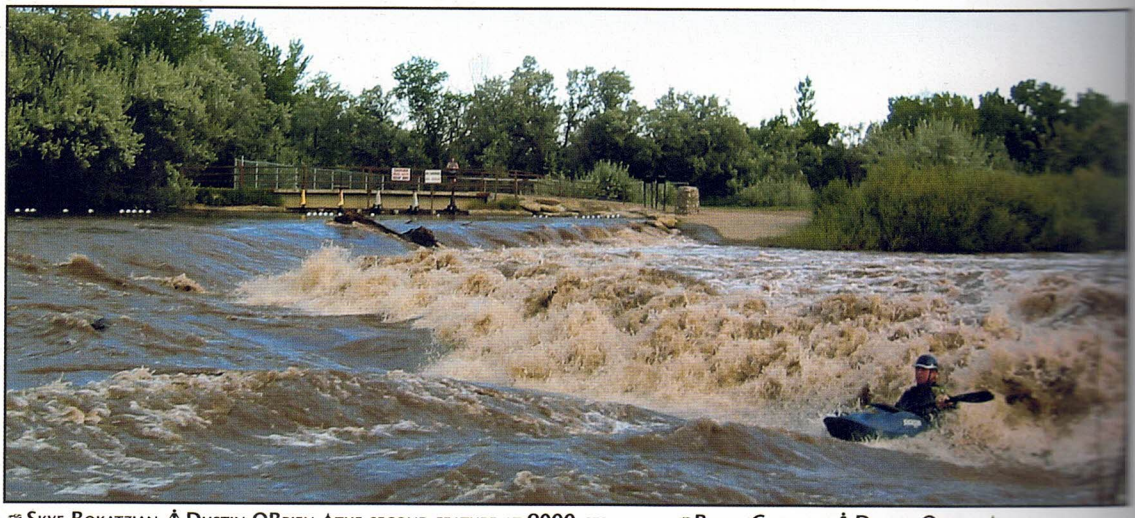
In addition to the play park, there are access points on the Animas above Aztec, in Aztec at Riverside Park, above Farmington near Flora Vista and in Farmington at the play park. Aside from the diversion dams the water is all class II. Be wary of the dams, they have taken more than one recreational swimmer's life over the years.



CFS	400<min<2600<best
Class	III
Eddy	good at normal flows
Quality	★★
Season	April to August
Gauge	Animas @ Farmington
Riv Access	All Veterans Memorial Park

Directions: Drive west into Farmington on NM 516 (Main Street). Take a left on San Juan Blvd, travel 0.4 miles and go left on Tucker Ave. Drive to the end of Tucker Ave to a gravel parking lot, where a sign says All Veterans Memorial Park. Carry your boat through the open gate and upstream to the play park. Put your skirt on and throw down.

-Dustin OBrien



Skye Bokatzian Dustin OBrien the second feature at 9000 cfs

Brent Capshaw Dustin Obrien snowy day

Driscoll ♦Pandoras Box yoga rock

Pandoras Box

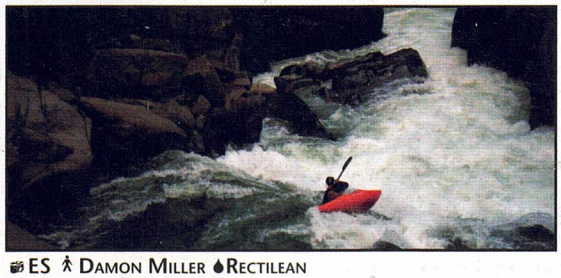
Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Town CFS	400	700	1200	1800
Character	scary	scary	scary	guess
Class	NR	V+	V+	NR
Quality	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	180 fpm action			
Remoteness	not bad, if you're Spiderman			
Hitchability	poor			
Length	2.5 miles			
Season	March-May, July-November; whenever its not peak and free of ice bridges			
Gauge	Animas River @ Durango			
Put-in	Rockwood Depot illegal hike in point that is GUIDE MANDATORY			
Take-out	Baker's Bridge			

So you want a little hair. You better want a bit more than a little hair when you put creek boat to shoulder and embark into this one. Into is the operative word here as you must negotiate a 45-minute hike across private land, and then lower your boat down a few hundred feet from the rim, to put-on for Colorado's most committing river section. Prepare to be trapped deep within some polished granite.

Hoping to score a guided tour of Pandoras Box (lower Rockwood) we arrived at the hike-in point late in the afternoon to meet paddling legend Damon Miller. An hour later the river demon came bouncing into the train parking lot with Brad Higinbotham in tow. While gearing up the apprehension was thick. The sun would be setting soon. To ease the tension Kyle mentioned something about us only needing a left or a right at the top of horizon lines. Then something like, "We're totally solid."

To which Damon simply replied, "You fuckin' better be."

The whitewater is pushy and the walls overhang the eddies for the first four major drops—including the unportageable, unscoutable Swollen Member. Actually the entire first ½ mile or so is of this nature—but Swollen Member is the largest of the bunch and can be downright terrifying. Even your guide will be scared. Swims here have resulted in expert paddlers literally swimming down the ensuing rapids until they could escape the walls towards the end of the run.



ES Damon Miller Rectilean

Despite the poop floating around in your boat, and as long as you are still in your boat, this is one of the most enchanting and intimate river stretches that I have ever experienced. A wave of relief will probably roll over you as you notice some boulder-strewn riverbanks emerging and possible spits of land to regroup on were you to experience separation anxiety from your trusty water craft. Do not let down your guard. For the most part you are still trapped, only now the rapids are longer and less channelized. If necessary (and it will be) you can scamper around a sieve or two and portage/scout parts of, but not entire rapids.

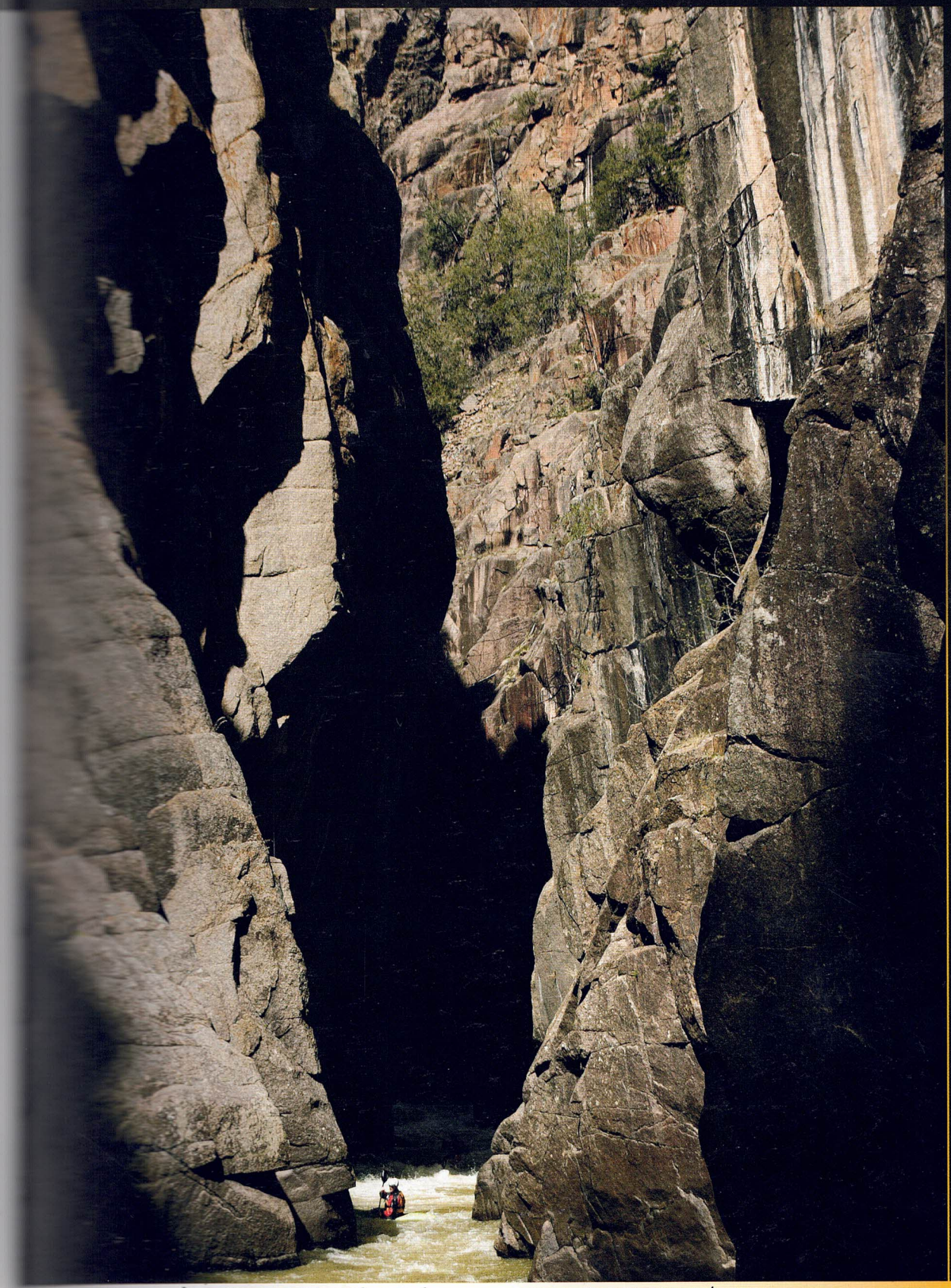
Eventually the walls shrink to a manageable size, but one last gorged section with two significant rapids, including the classic Rectilean remains. This last 1/4-mile slot should be scouted discreetly from the river-right rim. If you're feeling confident with your guide you may not need to scout here. Do what you need to do to be safe. You didn't get to scout the top section, so why scout now (we scouted).

Prepare for this run. Though merely 2.5 miles in length, prepping for this adventure sans guide is a task that even the world's most expert paddlers would find difficult. Varying levels on this run reveal different safe lines and knowing these lines can mean the difference between a safe afternoon run and a sketchy epic tale for campfires to come. Even finding the put-in to this run is a challenge, and finding the wrong put-in could be disastrous as death lurks in the middle box upstream of Pandoras.

Directions

Have a guide in mind or contact one prior to arrival in Durango. Go to army surplus store and outfit yourself in camouflage – including face paint. Meet guide at the Rockwood Box take-out. Don't get killed by landowners or whitewater.

THE ONLY TRULY GUIDE MANDATORY RUN IN THE BOOK, DUE TO THE FORMIDABLE COMBINATION OF ILLEGAL ACCESS, SHEER WALLS, AND MANDATORY V+ WHITEWATER. BE WEARY OF UNLOCKING THE BOX.



EVAN ROSS 🚶 LUKE HANSON & WARREN STARRETT 💧GIVING IN TO CURIOSITY, AND EXPLORING WHAT'S WITHIN

Upper Animas & Rockwood

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Town CFS	500	1000	2500	5500
Character	very long day	bony long day	good & continuous	my favorite
Upper A Class	IV- (IV)	IV	IV+ (V-s)	IV+ (Vs)
R-Wood Class	V-	V-	V	V+
Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	80 fpm Upper, 120 fpm Rockwood			
Remoteness	the train offers excellent escape options in the event of an emergency			
Hitchability	not advised due to the length, but possible			
Length	26.8 (Rockwood Box is 2.6 miles)			
Season	April-July with Rockwood option in shoulder seasons			
Gauge	(Tacoma Update) Animas at Durango, Animas at Silverton is put-in gauge (min 300)			
Put-in	Silverton			
Take-out	Rockwood Rail Yard or similar option			

As one of the few class IV+ runs in Colorado that has a big feel, the Upper Animas boasts spectacular scenery as it winds its way through 13,000' peaks in the heart of the San Juan Mountains. Despite the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge train paralleling the run, the area is wilderness paddling at its finest. The water is clear and ridiculously cold, but not all that difficult in nature with only three defined drops in the upper section—Garfield Slide, No Name (the hardest), and Broken Bridge. Two distinct features separate this run from any other class IV run in this book—the length and the water temperature.

At an impressive 24.2 miles, not including the Rockwood Box at the end, the Upper A can be physically exhausting and mentally taxing. At water levels over 4500 I have literally become sea sick from the constant bobbing of two-mile-long wave trains. Add in water temps that rarely reach 40°F, and a paddlers lack of preparation can become deadly. Flush drownings are surprisingly common, even among paddlers that know the river. Paddlers who dress warm and maintain some sort of physical conditioning throughout the summer commonly run the Upper A in a single day, where running shuttle the night before and putting on at 7:00 am is a good idea.

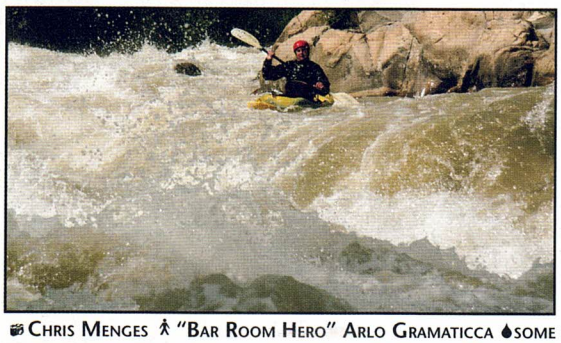
Rafters and kayakers looking for an overnight will usually camp at the Needleton train stop, where train assisted camping is an option. The train is also the creator and a solution to the trespassing issues at the take-out. The Tacoma dam serves as the raft take-out, where commercials (and privates if they choose) board the train and take it out to the Rockwood Depot, or all the way into Durango. Tickets are full price at the depot, but the conductors are rumored to accept cash.

If you aren't taking the train, then you have three options once you reach Tacoma—a legal hike-out from Tacoma, an illegal hike-out along the tracks to Rockwood, or the preferred option of running the Rockwood Box for the expert paddler.

Legal Hike Out: Take out at Tacoma, cross the bridge to the caretakers land, and hike upstream on river right on the ATV trail. Hike up the first gully on a steep single-track trail. Walk around the north side of the swamp, eventually crossing it to rejoin another ATV track. This leads to a large pipe, dirt road, and eventually Haviland Lake CG.

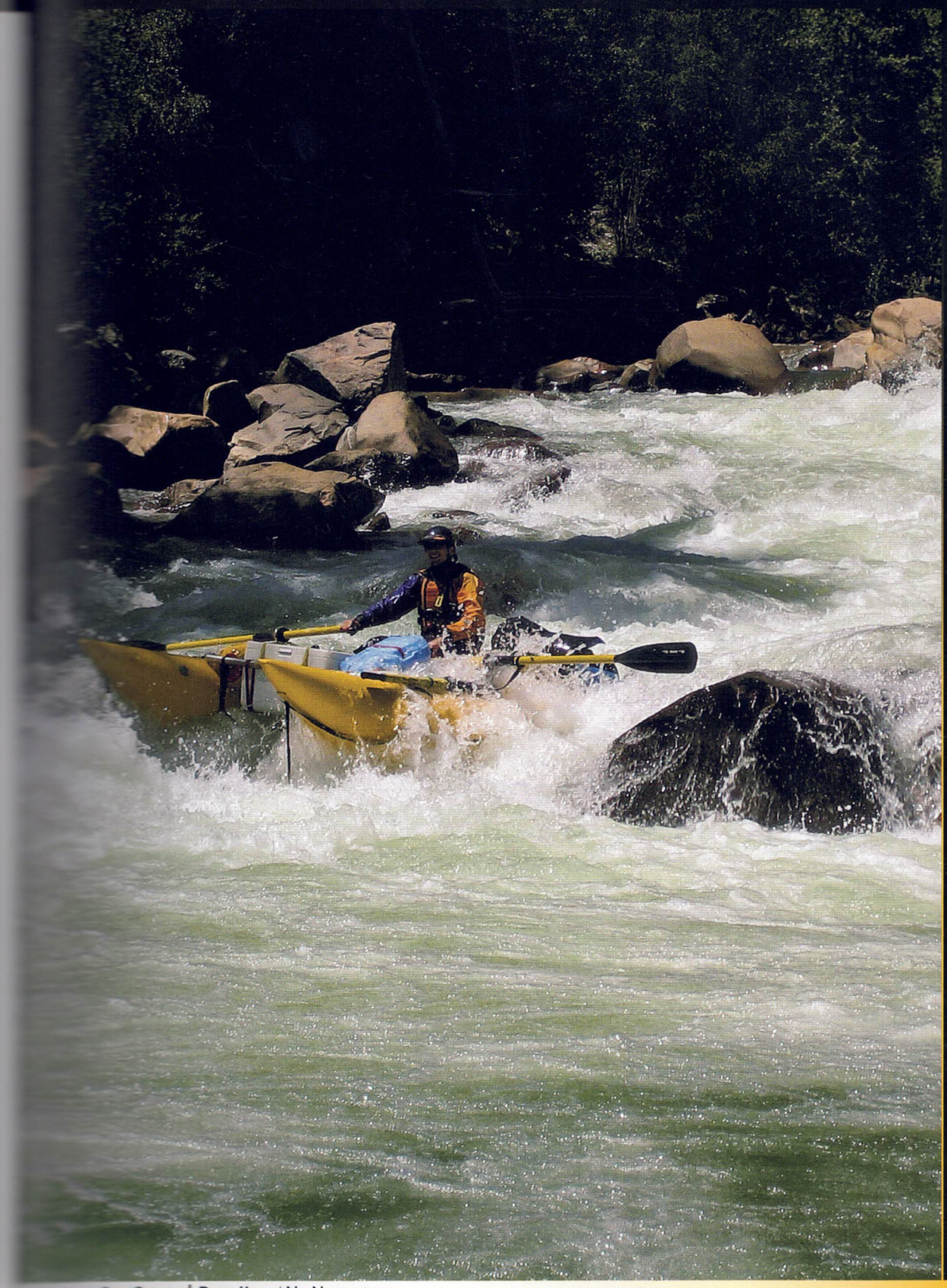
Illegal Hike Out: Paddle down to the railroad bridge, and eddy out on river right. Hike up the steep gully to the tracks, and continue trespassing downstream to the Rockwood Depot. Stories resonate among the train employees about the stupid kayaker that didn't hear the train coming because his boat was on his head. Incidents like this are seeing increased ticketing (although still rare) of river enthusiasts. This is the easiest hike out, but should be done after 5:30 pm to let the last train pass.

Rockwood Box: Eddy out at the train bridge, and hike the tracks to Mandatory Thrashing to scout (trespassing). I prefer the center tongue, but a far right line exists under the wall. At low flows paddlers can scout from river left while in the canyon, but its impossible to portage once in the canyon. Escape is not easy from the Box, but the



CHRIS MENGES "BAR ROOM HERO" ARLO GRAMATICCA SOME OF THE MORE EXCITING ACTION

The Upper Animas boasts spectacular scenery as it winds its way through 13,000 ft peaks in the heart of the San Juan Mountains between Silverton and Rockwood—an impressive 26.8 miles.



Sam Creacy Dana Kopf No Name rapid

scenery and quality of whitewater is top notch. Swims are very bad.

The take-out is river right, immediately below one of the larger rapids. There is a good sign marking the river right take-out, but a guide or pre-scout is recommended to avoid accidentally paddling into the sieved Middle Rockwood Box. Enjoy the 700' hike up as the grand finale of the workout.

Low Water Desperation: It's possible to hike into the canyon and just run the Rockwood Box (V-) as low as 300 cfs.

Directions

To reach the take-out, take Hwy 200 (FR 745) east from Hwy 550, and follow the windy road down to the Rockwood Rail Yard. The turnoff to the Haviland CG take-out is just north of the Rockwood turn on Hwy 550. Two put-in options exist in Silverton. The first is to utilize South Mineral Creek, where a dirt road leads away from Hwy 550, but this option requires negotiating a low RR bridge (or just putting in from the tracks). Rafts should only use the commercial put-in to the east of downtown Silverton.

Tall Timbers Resort Above Tacoma Gauge

In the first week of October 2006 a torrential downpour hammered the Four Corners area, pumping the San Juan rivers and creeks and other desert rivers up to levels that were higher than that seasons spring runoff. A small group of out-of-town paddlers had the pleasure of sneaking in a handful of late-season creek runs in the area, as locals stuck to the in-town freestyle that reached epic proportions. More importantly, it gave all paddlers some kind of very rough, rudimentary, and potentially inaccurate way of judging the levels based on the new Tacoma Gauge.

Installed August 1, 2006, the Tacoma Gauge is the newest addition to boater-friendly gauges in Colorado, and the placement of the gauge on the Upper Animas is superb. Located upstream of Tacoma, the new gauge is above the Rockwood Box and Pandoras, yet shortly below the Cascade Creek confluence. For the first time ever, river enthusiasts will be able to judge the flow of the Upper A, Rockwood, and Pandoras more accurately than the Animas Town Gauge allowed for, since the lower gauge included the flow from a number of other tributaries—including the large Hermosa Creek (now easier to estimate with Tacoma minus Town). The gauge also allows for a more accurate flow barometer of Cascade Creek and the Lime Gorges. The narrow window of Needle and Canyon Creeks still require a visual level check at the time of attempted descent.

There was only one disappointing fact about the new gauge—we wouldn't know the new levels before our print deadline for this book. Hallelujah for rain. The chart represents the flow correlation of the two gauges, which includes the feeder creeks of Hermosa Creek and others. The chart could/should represent the correlation based on every tributary at the exact same point of seasonal runoff—i.e. if all tribs were at the same elevation. Therefore an adjustment based on the elevation of snowmelt will need to be factored in to reach more accurate flow levels. Before peak, early season flows will mean a higher estimate on lower elevation streams and a lower estimate on higher elevation streams. After peak season flows will mean a higher estimate for higher elevation streams and a lower estimate for lower elevation streams. Use the first for the chart for the estimated level and then write-in your Tacoma Gauge levels in the second chart based on your experiences.

October Rainstorm Gauge Comparison (adjust estimated comparison for low elevation or high elevation snow melt)

Town Gauge	500	700	1000	1800	2500	3200	5500	7000
Tacoma Gauge	350	490	700	1260	1750	2240	3850	4900

Write-in Chart for Future Tall Timbers Resort Gauge Readings

CFS at	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Pandoras Box				
Upper Animas				
Cascade Crk				
2nd Lime Crk				
1st Lime Crk				

Jen Ross Jared Johnson Rockwood Box

Needle & Canyon Creek

Besides being one of the most beautiful, lengthy, and pristine rivers in this book, the Upper Animas is also a notable waterway as the main artery, and arguably the lifeblood of the San Juans. Nearly a dozen feeder creeks flow into the Upper A between Silverton and the Rockwood Box. Although most are too steep or too small of creekbeds, three of them standout as legitimate kayak runs—Cascade Creek (which contains the waters of Lime) from the west, and Needle Creek and Canyon Creek as hike-and-huck options from the east.

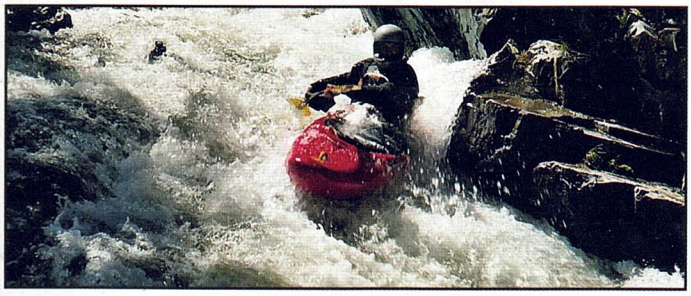
Running these creeks is fun as hell, as it requires navigating all or part of the Upper A and the Rockwood Box, in addition to a descent of either run—unless paddlers opt for one of the Upper A hike-out options, but where's the adventure in that. Water levels are sensitive and the amount of effort is high for either run, making completion of Needle or Canyon a real treat. Completion of both in a single outing is an amazing accomplishment, and will likely require pain pills and a beer at the take-out. Adventure paddlers, welcome.

Needle Creek

Needle Creek is a small tributary of the Upper Animas River that drains the 14,000' Needle Mountains—Sunlight Peak, Mount Eolus, and Windom Peak. Accessing Needle can require some creativity—this is the Weminuche Wilderness and it is definitely not roadside. On our exploratory run, we enjoyed an overnight trip on the Animas in order to get to Needle Creek. Another option could involve a train ride to Needleton, where excellent camping and the nearby trailhead can be found.

Forest Service trail 504 runs parallel to Needle Creek from the Animas River up to Chicago Basin and beyond. Hike up the trail to access the top of Needle, putting-on whenever you are tired of hiking and ready for hucking.

There will be wood in the creek, but on our run I was surprised at how little of it was in the way. All of the main drops were clear, with only a little lumber in some of the flatter sections, and it was possible to get around or under most of that. I was also surprised at how quality most of the drops actually were. There are some nice granite cascades and slides, like Needle Tracks, to spice up the continual rock gardens. One of the more complex drops, Eye of the Needle, was a boof over a wood dam leading into a tight, twisting slot move with a fairly sticky hole at the bottom.



Josh Sandage

CFS	140<min<200<best
Class	V
Quality	★★★
Gradient	440 fpm & steeper
Length	1 mile (variable)
Season	May to July (not peak)
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Upper Animas section

Best of all, we were able to combine micro-creeking, big water, and gorge paddling all in one day.

Directions: Put in on the Upper Animas, hike Needle, take out at Rockwood Depot. Recommended two-day trip using Needleton base camp.

-Gordon Dalton

Canyon Creek (Crazy Woman Creek)

Welcome to Durango, the land of gorges and steep waterfalls, and in the case of Canyon Creek—a jumble of carved rock, falls and a sketchy cauldron at the end. It's the cauldron that just gave you the beat down of a lifetime because you attempted the 30' falls at too high of a level. Or maybe it just beat you because that's what cauldrons do to kayakers.

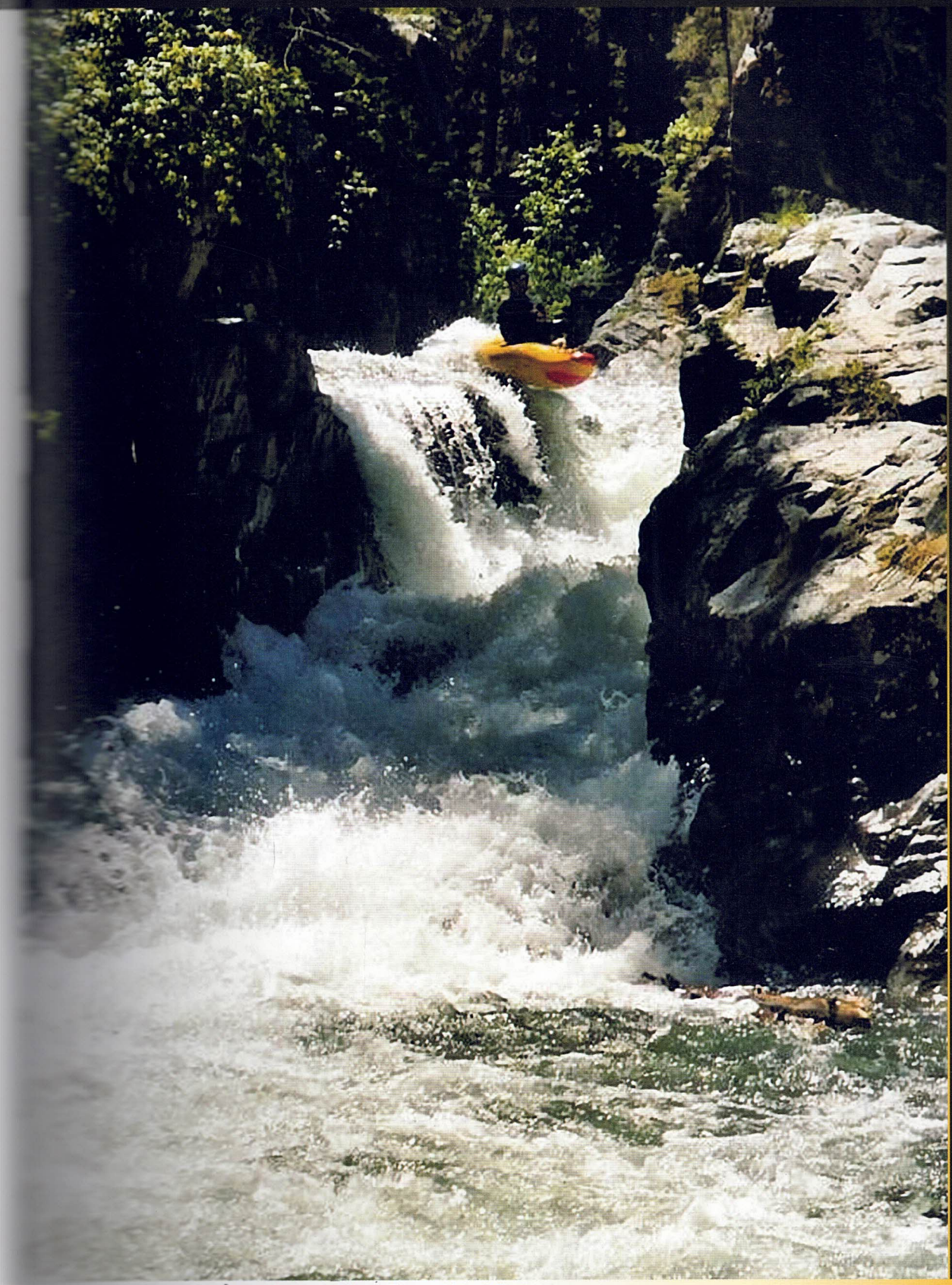
The level is sensitive on this one, and deceiving at the creek mouth, thus requiring a visual check of the last drop to really know if it's going. As a general rule, if the mouth of the creek looks remotely runnable then the gorge will be too high. If a foamy would pin in the run out, then the flow is probably good, but could be too low. Wet rocks will be okay, as you drop an impressive 680 fpm. The stuff in between the lower and the upper should be bony, and occasionally parts are clogged with wood. The upper starts as high as a small reservoir, less than one mile upstream.

CFS	60<min<100<best
Class	V+<250<NR
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	680 fpm
Length	less than 1 mile
Season	May to July (not peak)
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Upper Animas section

Not that I need to tell you any of that, be-

Josh Sandage Gordon Dalton the inbetween of Needle Creek

Requires navigating all or part of the Upper A and the Rockwood Box, in addition to a descent of either creek. Adventure paddlers welcome.

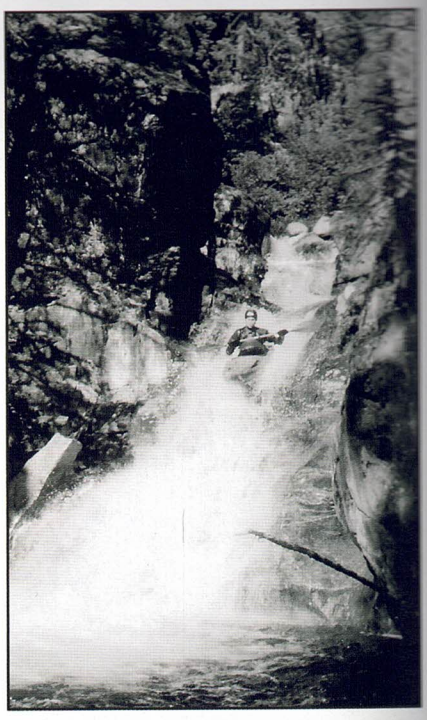


Gordon Dalton Josh Sandage Needle Tracks, Needle Creek

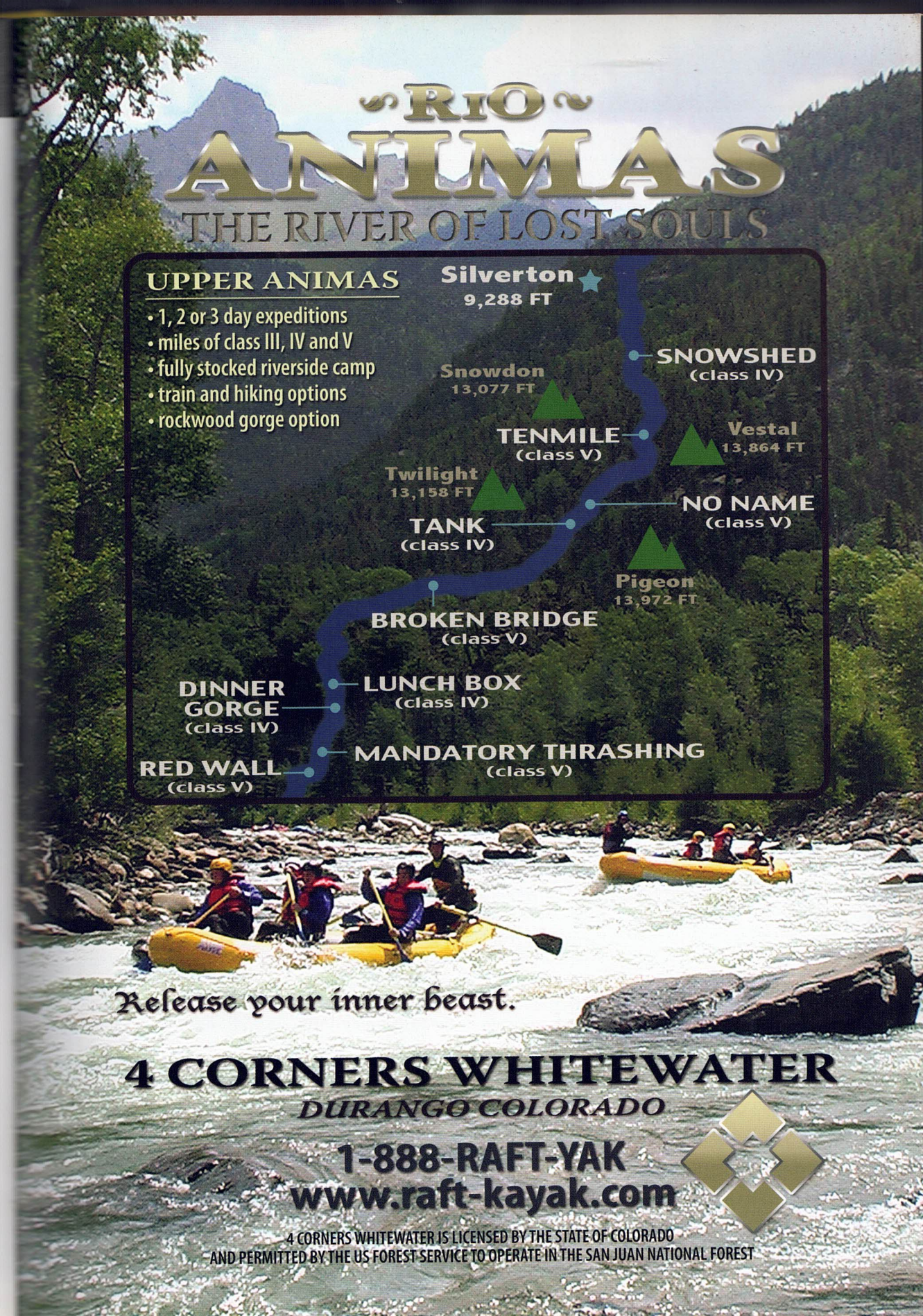
cause you are going to want to scout everything in detail, as you would for a first D. River right is a good start, and consider taking your boat with you since the take-out of the first gorge is a 1/4-mile upstream. Don't make it your last D and enjoy the maxed-out adrenaline. This is one of the most intense sections of whitewater in this book.

I do need to talk about the landowner issues, even though the waterfalls are on Forest Service property. On my second attempt at the creek JJ and I were confronted by the Tacoma Dam keeper, who informed us that he would shoot us if we tried to paddle the creek, and then threatened to race us down the hill on his 4-wheeler and push our friends boats into the river. We didn't put on, but back at the river's shore the debate was heated, with the landowner talking about that "damn book" that somehow said it wasn't his creek. Neither did the title company paperwork. Although the situation is still problematic, relations are supposedly becoming better, and kayakers are able to get in without conflict. Approach the entire situation carefully, and more importantly, be very, very stealth.

Directions: Use either the Upper A put-in, or the recommended Cascade Creek put-in, and take out at the Rockwood Depot. One day is long, but sufficient and preferred due to the substandard camping options on the bottom third of the Upper A, not to mention the landowner issues at Tacoma.



GORDON DALTON JOSH SANDAGE CANYON CREEK GNAR
KM DURANGO SILVERTON NARROW GAUGE TRAIN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Cascade Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Visual CFS	230	300	400	550
Character	slow	lots of eddies	more boofs open up	rockin' with holes
Class	IV (P)	IV+ (P)	IV+ (P)	V- (P)
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	175 fpm			
Remoteness	very high			
Hitchability	good, but I would hitch before you put on			
Length	10.3 miles total (2 miles Cascade, 8.3 miles on Upper Animas & Rockwood Box)			
Season	May, June			
Gauge	(Tacoma Update) Animas at Durango near 3200+/-			
Put-in	Purgatory Flats			
Take-out	See Tacoma and Rockwood take-out options in the Upper Animas description			

Cascade Creek has only begun to receive attention from the kayaking community, and it won't take long before it catches on. Formerly known as the 3rd Gorge Lime, most of the exploration of this section of river was viewed as more of a paddle out after successful completion of the first and second gorge of Lime. Teams of experts used the Purgatory Flats trail as a staging area to leave the boats and car camp at the top of the trail. Only recently has it been viewed as a separate run—another typically beautiful San Juan Mountain stream with excellent class IV creek style action that feeds into the Upper Animas above the Rockwood Box. Look to this run when other area creeks are blown out, or for easier creek action at low flow.

Although this is a technically easy creek, boaters will want to come prepared for a long and exhausting day (despite a deceivingly short shuttle). This run comes complete with a 1.5-mile downhill hike to the put-in, the possibility of tricky portages, a fun paddle out on the Upper Animas, and either a portage take-out above the Rockwood Box, or even more action in the Rockwood culminating with a 700' uphill climb to the car. Add in a pin or two, or a dam keeper threatening to shoot you (if you attempt Canyon Creek), and you can make this day anywhere from long to very long. Whatever you do, do not forget to leave beer at the take-out.

The hike down the trail to Purgatory Flats usually takes less than 45 minutes. A class III warm-up section quickly brings you to the second rapid, Landslide, the only named drop on the run. Expect to portage the top half of the drop on the left, where a seal launch into the action gets exciting at higher levels.

From here you will enter the Narrows, a continuously walled-in section where a misplaced log could (and has) caused excitement. Although generally read-and-run with good eddies, the mental difficulty is taxing as numerous corners must be run blind. Two ledge holes require boofs at high flow, but the technical difficulty remains low. A waterfall pours in on river right at the approximate 1/3 point in the run—halfway through the Narrows. Enjoy the spectacular scenery for the next mile to the confluence of the Animas, where I highly recommend taking a nap on the sunny beaches.

This is a great run for V- creek boaters to hone their skills in non-threatening whitewater—if the wood is clear which it was in 2006. A successful run requires strong communication, good physical condition and the willingness to run blind corners in an inescapable canyon. Experts will enjoy it for the relaxing entrance in pursuit of checking out the Upper-A scenery, Canyon Creek, or the Rockwood. Some, including myself, may never run the upper 2/3 of the Upper Animas again after running this sweet little section.

Directions

The take-out is at the Rockwood Train station, 16 miles north of Durango. Take Hwy 550 north and turn right on FR 745 (Hwy 200), weaving down to the Rockwood Rail Yard. Park in the lot south of the tracks. To reach the put-in, drive back out to Hwy 550 and head north to Durango Mountain Resort (formerly Purgatory). Turn right into the Tacoma Village entrance (mm 49, directly across from the lifts), and veer left to the parking area. Hike the Purgatory Flats Trail down to the river.

Tim Hawkins ♦ area scenery

It's not what it is, but also what it combines with. Hands down one of the best ways to experience the Upper Animas scenery, Canyon Creek, and the Rockwood Box—in one day.

Joe Keck KM veiw from the Landslide portage route at high flow

Cascade Creek Slot

Aside from the array of beautiful but mostly unrunnable waterfalls upstream of Hwy 550, the gorge below the highway is the first quality section of whitewater on Cascade Creek. The put-in for this short but sweet gem is river left, directly downstream of the Hwy 550 bridge that crosses the creek.

There is decent scouting on river right, and paddlers need to use it since logs often inhabit the narrow gorge. Plan your lines and eddies from here. The first 30 seconds of the run is a tight but mellow jaunt. The second 30 seconds is tighter. Have fun boofing and charging through this picturesque chasm. After the second 8' falls, take out on river left and hike out on the trail along the cliff.

Michael Barton ⅄ Mathew Klema ♦freewheeling the last waterfall, Cascade Creek Slot

Although rarely attempted, paddlers that have continued from here down to the confluence of Lime Creek and Cascade Creek have given the thumbs-down, due to an excess of unnavigable wood. If this section gets a good flush, and if the levels coincide, then it would be feasible to use this as the put-in for the Cascade Creek section.

Directions: If you are coming from Durango on Hwy 550, continue about one mile north of Durango Mountain Resort. Cross over the creek at the hairpin turn, immediately turn right and park.

-Brad Higinbotham

CFS	150<min
Class	V<300<V+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	steep
Length	short
Season	April to June
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Hwy 550 hairpin

Hermosa Creek

Ah, Hermosa Creek. A place where high expectations, based on the numerous Grade-A quality runs nearby, are brutally shattered by an excessive amount of wood in the upper half. Only 6.5 miles of class IV in the bottom stretch are good, which require 3.5 miles of hiking to access (fortunately downhill, and one of the best boat dragging trails ever). It's not that bad, but relative to the great class IV of the Piedra, Upper Animas, and Cascade Creek, the Hermosa Creek run isn't going to be high on the out-of-towners list, and its not just the hike (which accounts for half of the shuttle).

The bottom half of the creek is very clean of wood because there aren't any large rocks that obstruct the flow. It compliments the wood situation for kayaking, but makes for a rather dull 6.5 miles of one continuous wave train with hardly another whitewater feature in sight. With few places to boof, eddy, ferry, or do much of anything in a kayak other than float, I struggle to recommend this run. The upper half has many more rocks, and if the wood situation ever improves the shuttled run could be worthy. There is one portage around a diversion dam towards the end of the run, which I walked on river right.

Directions: Take Hwy 550 north of Durango for 11 miles, and turn left just past the commerce center (don't blink) of Hermosa. This will lead to a bridge that crosses Hermosa Creek, an adequate take-out. To get to the put-in, take FR 576 upstream to the Hermosa Creek Trailhead, and hike down the trail as it maintains its course upstream. Put in at the third tributary.

CFS	500<min<1000<best
Class	IV-<1000<IV+
Quality	★★
Gradient	100 fpm
Length	6.5 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Hermosa Creek Trail
Take-out	FR 576

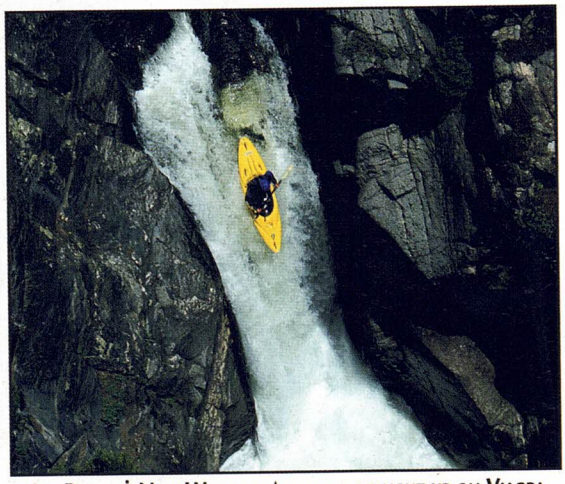
Tim Hawkins ♦2nd Gorge Lime, typically Durango—stunning beauty, exhaustingly rugged and dangerously committing

2nd Gorge Lime

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Visual CFS	120	150	200	300
Character	brutal entrance	less brutal entrance	holes getting juicy	gorges are bad
Class	IV+ (V)	V- (V)	V- (V+)	V (NRs)
Quality	★	★★	★★★★	★
Gradient	280 fpm action			
Remoteness	high			
Hitchability	poor			
Length	5 miles, plus 1.5-mile hike out			
Season	June, July (not peak)			
Gauge	(Tacoma Update) Animas at Durango near1700+/-			
Put-in	Old Lime Creek Road			
Take-out	hike out to Purgatory Flats CG			

When you get to the put-in, you are going to think it is too low to run. If it looks like it is flowing well, abort mission. The first few miles of the section can be very frustrating. The river starts out mellow and scrapy, and gradually turns into class IV-V super-mank. Keep your wits about you or you will get pinned. There are a couple of pseudo-gorges that may require scouting, and a guide will be an advantage. Just getting to the crux of this section is a painfully manky experience.

After several miles of mank, you will arrive at a gorge with a very abrupt horizon line at the entrance. Beach your boats on river left and wade to river right to scout this triple drop. The river drops about forty feet in the next thirty yards. You can see it mostly from the right bank, but you can't really see the hole at the bottom. You can probably scramble up the cliff and check it out from the top if you need to. If you choose to portage this rapid, it will likely require roping the boats out of the gorge, and should be done on river right. I would consider this the toughest drop on the run.



Jen Ross Nick Wigston getting straight up on Viagra

After this entrance rapid, get out on river right and climb to the top of the gorge. Walk down and scout the rest of the gorge all at once, as it is impossible to scout from within. There are four drops in the main gorge, all of which have sticky holes in the landings. Deep Throat is the third rapid, and it drops about ten feet into a cave-like crack on the left—forcing paddlers to drive hard right over the drop. The view from this horizon line is intense. Once through you will be in the pool above Viagra, a beautiful 25' waterfall into a big pool, which without a doubt will give you a hard-on (see a doctor if it lasts for more than four hours).

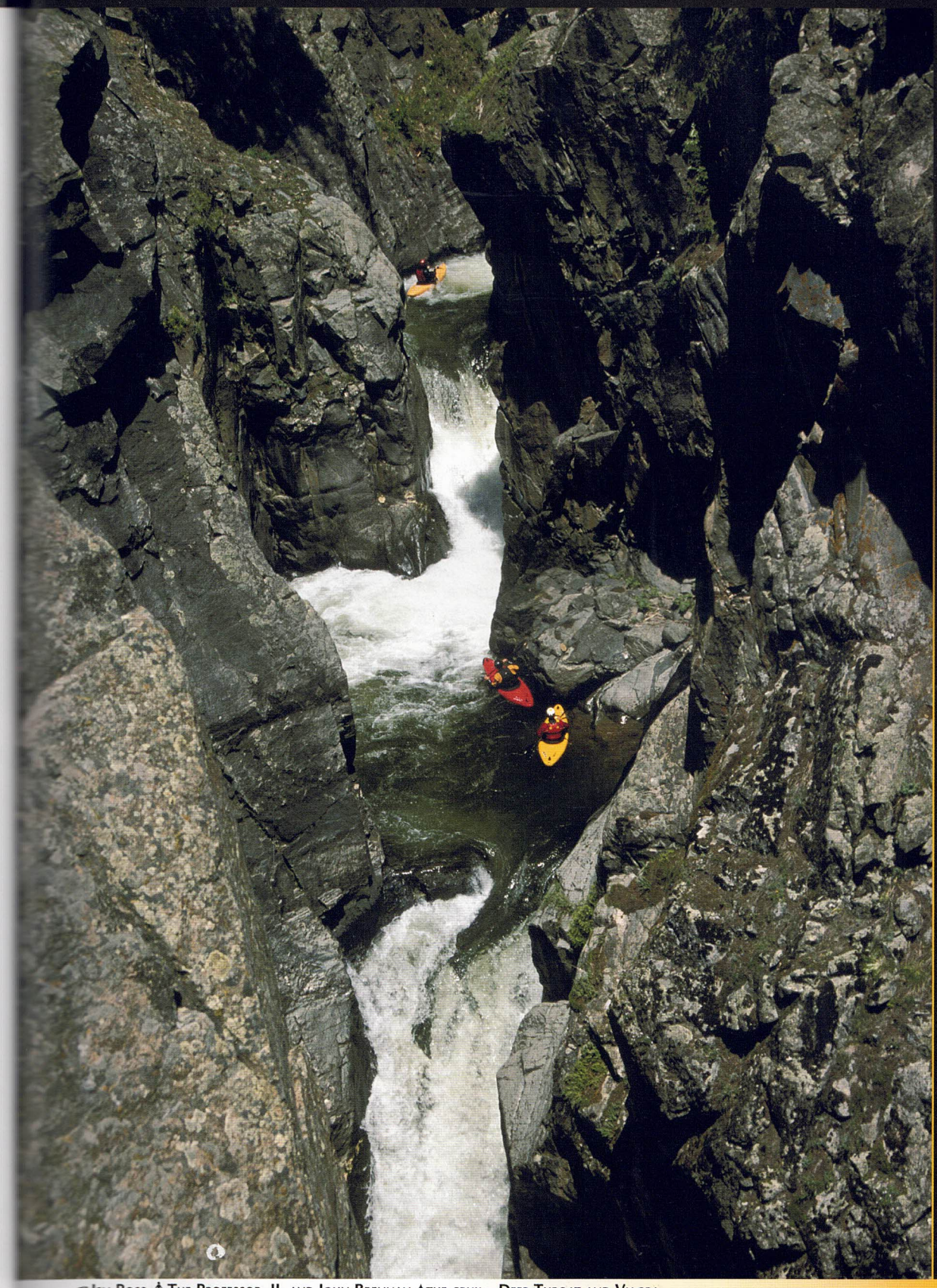
Below Viagra Gorge, there is another mile of mank before the take-out. The hike-out trail can be tricky to find, so start by taking out a ¼-mile downstream of the confluence of Lime and Cascade, and then hiking directly towards the hill. A trail parallels the river in Purgatory Flats, with a branch heading directly up the valley wall. Hike the 1.5-miles uphill with multiple switchbacks to the take-out vehicle and pop a cold one. A kayak pack will help you reach the beer before your friends.

-Nick Wigston

Directions

To get to the take-out, drive north on 550 from Durango, and turn right into the Tacoma Village entrance (mm 49) found directly across from Durango Mountain Resort. The Purgatory Flats Trailhead is the hike-out destination. To get to the put-in, head a few miles further north on Hwy 550, and immediately turn right after the first hairpin corner (where 550 crosses Cascade). Take Lime Creek Road for several miles (rough road), eventually reaching a left turn and immediate elevation descent to the river. Put in as soon as possible to avoid shallow and portage infested flat.

With names like Deep Throat and Viagra, the stout whitewater of the 2nd Gorge is sure to arouse those looking for some dead-sexy adrenaline. Pack safety and watch out for sticky holes.



Durango • 2nd Gorge Lime

Jen Ross ⅄ The Professor, JJ, and John Brennan ♦ the crux—Deep Throat and Viagra

1st Gorge Lime

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Visual CFS	140	200	300	450
Character	scrapy at put-in	friendly level	hole at Adrenaline	watch for Dragon
Class	V- (V)	V	V (V+)	V+
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	190 fpm			
Remoteness	gorged at times, but short with multiple escape points			
Hitchability	poor			
Length	3 miles			
Season	May, June, July (not peak, and free of snow)			
Gauge	(Tacoma Update) Animas at Durango near 2600+/-			
Put-in	top of Old Lime Creek Rd			
Take-out	below gorge walls, at old campground			

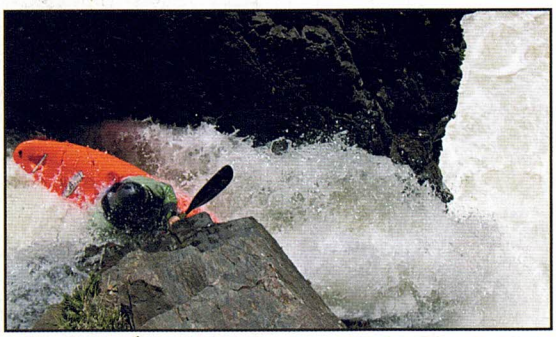
The first gorge of Lime Creek is in character with many of the runs in the area. It tends to be fairly manageable and relatively easy at low flow, but can quickly turn into a raging torrent at higher levels. Also in character with the area, the 9652' put-in is stunningly beautiful, and the Old Lime Creek Road that parallels the run a few hundred feet above the water sees very little traffic, keeping the area pristine, quiet, and easily accessible (although 4WD can help). Advanced paddlers that are new to the area will find that this section is the most forgiving and the best way to get into the groove of San Juan creeking.

The whitewater here is class V, but with the exception of the signature Adrenaline Falls, expect a run that starts out easy and escapable, and gradually builds in difficulty and commitment. As a rule of thumb expect low to medium flow, and a good first time level if scraping over rocks at the beginning. If floating, then the whitewater will be big with few eddies, fewer scouts and a series of intense blind corners that you will either love or hate.

A number of medium sized ledges get paddlers warmed up before the walls start to tighten. Adrenaline Falls is the tallest drop, with a noticeable horizon line just above the Coal Creek tributary. Scout and/or portage on the left. Setting safety to the right of the lip can aide in botched lines through the entrance move, a short drop with a hole that makes the lineup for the narrow, near-vertical slot difficult. Broken paddles, sideways, upside down, backwards, and all around tweaked lines can make for spectacular crash and burns. Few paddlers will make it through the bottom hole upright, but a large pool collects gear and people. If the carnage has already been intense, the level too high, or you just spent six hours freeing a pinned boat in a snowstorm, then hike out to the road on the right immediately downstream of Coal Creek. It's possible to pre-scout the level at Adrenaline here as well.

Below here, well-timed boofs, on-river hand signals and whistles will get teams through the drops without incident, as the corners grow more blind and the cliff walls grow steeper and higher. At about the ¾ point the walls will reach their maximum height of about 300', with the river winding through sharp bends at an average width of about 12'. These are the S-Turns with weird banking corners and holes. The exit of these and a 100-yard straight away leads to Dragons Back falls, a non-vertical 14'er divided by a rock spine. The common line is on river right, with a scout on the left scree field.

The walls disappear, and a quick float brings teams to Old Clear Creek Road on the right and soon the take-out.

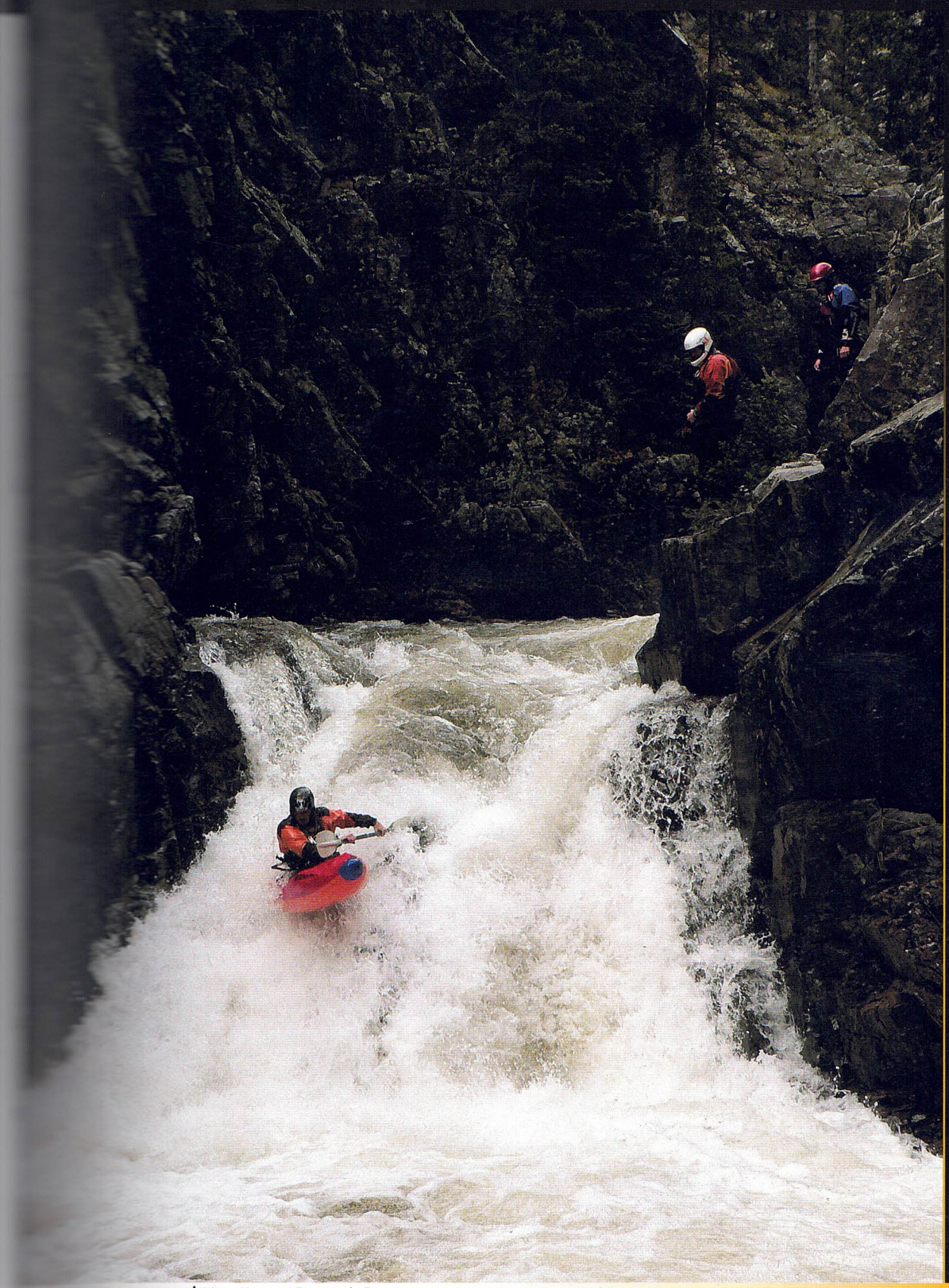


Katie Selby ⛹ Jed Selby 💧Adrenaline Falls lives up to its name

Directions

Drive north on Hwy 550 for four miles from the summit of Coal Bank Pass, and then turn right at the Old Lime Creek Road sign. Turn left and drive upstream to a small parking lot for the put-in. Head downstream along the bumpy dirt road, stopping occasionally if you want a glimpse of the river (although by no means a scout). After a series of switchbacks you will once again be next to Lime creek. The take-out is an old campground area on the left, and off the road.

The warm-up of the San Juan creeks. Mellow gorges, a few stout falls, and easy access make this the run to start with for first time creekers to the area. Just don't put on with too much water.



Durango • 1st Gorge Lime

Scott Baker Nate Klema Dragon's Back

Forks of the Animas

Located in the heart of the San Juan's along Hwy 550 to the south of Ouray and north of Durango, Silverton boasts more mining claims than actual residences. The historic downtown is a quiet place that lacks the large scale developments commonly associated with other towns, and the steep and deep Silverton Mountain doesn't have any plans for expansion—just hardcore, expert-only terrain with a windowless step-van that serves as a shuttle back to the single-lift base area. The lifeblood of the town arrives in the summer, as narrow gauge train passengers take an intermission from riding the rails by patronizing the seasonal shops, and the occasional downhill mountain biker or kayaker celebrates a successful descent with a happy hour beer. Although none of the whitewater is amazing (with the South Mineral Creek exception), there are plenty of low-volume paddling options on the upstream side of town. Respect the mining claims and enjoy the numerous Forks of the Animas.

Silverton Daily

Below Howardsville the Animas begins to pick up it's pace once again. The road bends away from the river as you drop into a non-committing but beautiful mountain canyon. High cliffs and seasonal wildflowers combine with quality Class II-III whitewater making this a great afternoon float, or a good addition to any of the other Upper A runs. High water probes have also reported decent play boating, especially on a series of man-made structures found in *downtown* Silverton. This has not been confirmed by the author but may be worth looking into if you're in the area and all the other runs are blown out.

Directions: The put-in is at the Howardsville Bridge, 3.9 miles Northeast of Silverton on County Road 2 (veer right). Take out in Silverton or just downstream of the confluence with Mineral Creek.

CFS	150<min
Class	III-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	90 fpm
Length	5 miles (variable)
Season	June to August
Gauge	Animas @ Silverton
Put-in	Howardsville Bridge
Take-out	Upper A put-in

Eureka to Howardsville

As the Animas floats through Eureka it loses it's serious gradient and enters a broad alpine valley. The next 3.6 miles to Howardsville offer a mellow class I-II beginner float as the river braids its way down towards Silverton. Look out for wood as well as mining waste in this shallow streambed—especially with the lack of available eddies.

Directions: From Silverton take CR 2 northeast just under four miles to Howardsville. The bridge here serves as the easiest take-out for the run, although other take-out options exist. From Howardsville continue another 3.6 miles to the abandoned Eureka mine, and the next crossing of the river. Park on the left and find a good put-in close to the road.

CFS	150<min
Class	II
Quality	★★
Gradient	20 fpm
Length	3.6 miles
Season	June, July
Gauge	Animas @ Silverton
Riv Access	CR 2

Cement Creek (no beta box)

In the late spring, as the height of the run-off drains the San Juan mountains, Cement Creek comes to life. Local scouts have reported mid-quality class III-IV creek boating found on Cement Creek—the tributary that starts it's downhill trajectory near Silverton Mountain ski area. Extensive scouting is necessary due to the creek's tendency to collect wood, as well as other road/mining debris. There aren't many eddies, so know how to stop.

Directions: Take out at the town park in Silverton. From here, take a left on Highway 110 towards Silverton Mountain ski area. The most common put-in is at the second bridge, but you could go further.

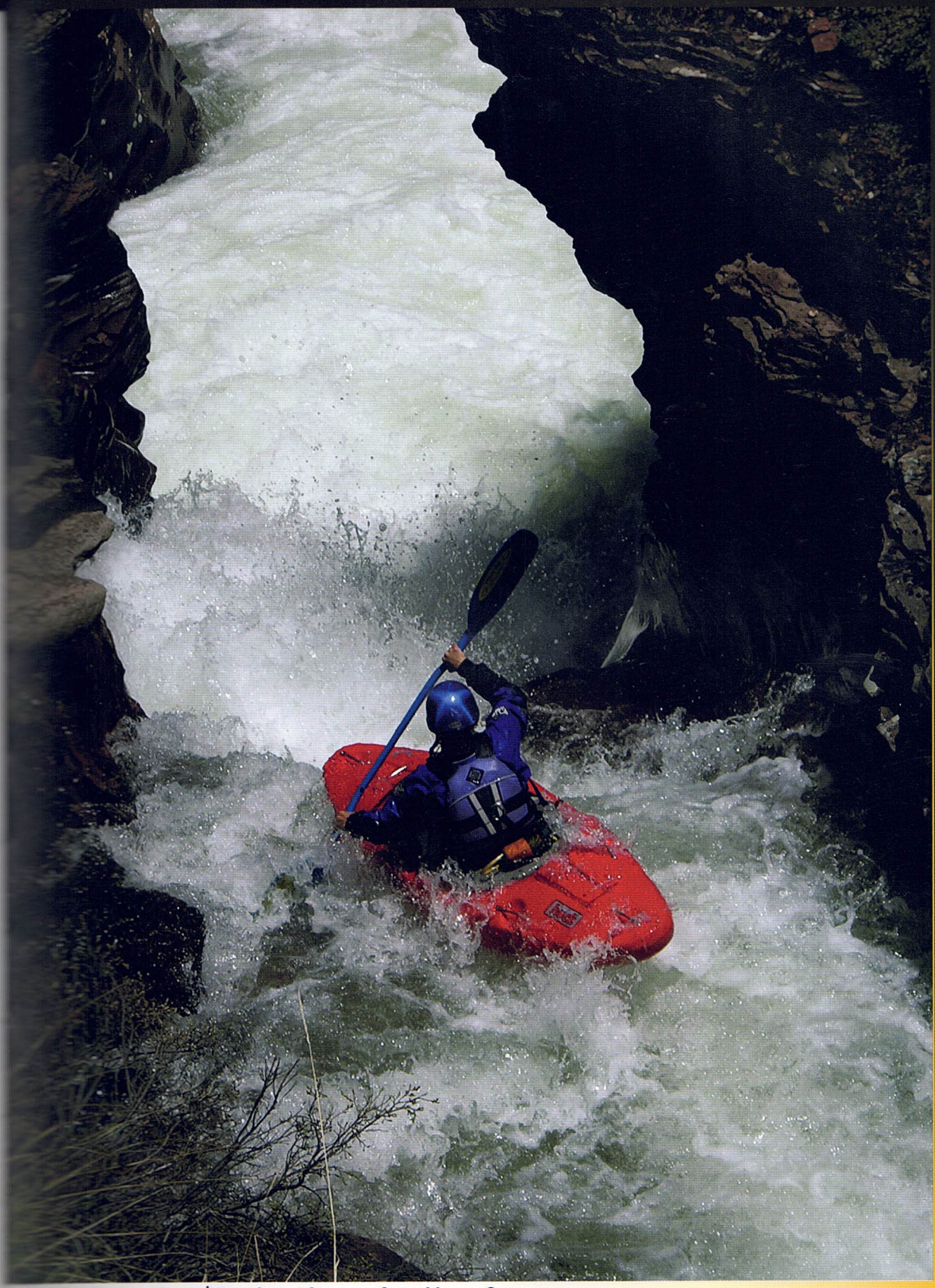
Lower South Mineral & Mineral Creek (no beta box)

There are three ways to break up the class III+ waters of Mineral Creek. The Lower South Fork is the most obvious, where a put-in at the campground near Ice Lakes trailhead provides the best start below the NR drops. Continue roadside along FR 585 for a pleasant cruise to the confluence, and the start of the Lower Mineral run. Continue on the lower run, which parallels Hwy 550 towards Silverton. Paddlers can opt to paddle all the way to the Upper Animas confluence.

If the area flows are peaking, then check out Mineral Creek from the Middle Fork to the confluence with the South Fork. Put in on FR 679, aka the Ophir Pass Rd.

Directions: Use Hwy 550, FR 585, and FR 679 for all put-ins and take-outs.

-Nate Klema (all descriptions)



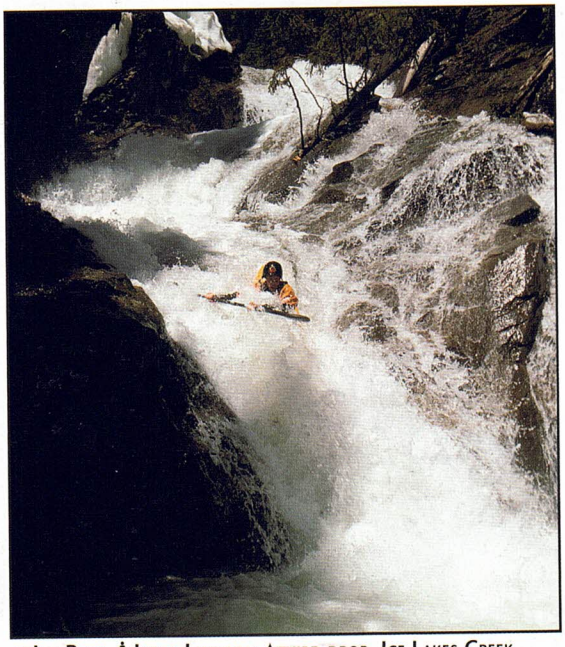
Yonton Mehler Katie Selby Cauldron, South Mineral Creek

South Mineral Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Actual CFS	100	120	200	280
Character	shallow in between	eddies form	drops open up more	short & sweet
Class	V	V	V+	V+
Quality	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	320 fpm (160' total)			
Remoteness	semi-remote, with a tiring walk to the 4WD road			
Hitchability	hike/scout your shuttle			
Length	1/2 mile			
Season	June, July (road clear of snow)			
Gauge	approximatly 1/2 of Mineral Creek Gauge			
Put-in	below 30' falls with shallow landing			
Take-out	a few small ledges past the Cauldron			

South Mineral Creek is one of those runs that has all of the characteristics of a truly classic run, but it never comes together all the way like its high-alpine siblings. It's absolutely beautiful, reasonably easy to get to from Silverton and has clear low-volume whitewater pouring off one of the cleaner vertical 20'ers in the state. Sounds great until the scout reveals that the class V section is only a ½-mile long and is surrounded by mostly unrunnable drops (the few attempts on the harder drops haven't proven to be highly successful, mostly from shallow landings). By definition it is a roadside run, but the road is slow 4WD, and by the time you hike down to the creek, run the creek, and hike back up to the road, you will have hiked at least one mile.

A short and slow drive, after crossing over Ice Lakes Creek (a sweet three drop series), leads to an open clearing that is about a mile long. The run is nestled in this clearing (actually a huge avalanche path) in a miniature gorge with walls averaging 10 feet in height. Scout the entire run, starting at the third drop, a photogenic 20'er with a hidden rock in the landing. Boof right. Immediately below this drop is a chunky slide called Shish-Kabob with a log on one side and a pothole on the other. Ride the spine out and into a screaming fast, 90° right-bend which leads to the narrow Cauldron drop. These drops make up the crux and center part of the run. If they are free of wood (rare after big avalanche years) and the level looks good, then go ahead and complete the scout and plan on running laps.



Jen Ross Jared Johnson third drop, Ice Lakes Creek

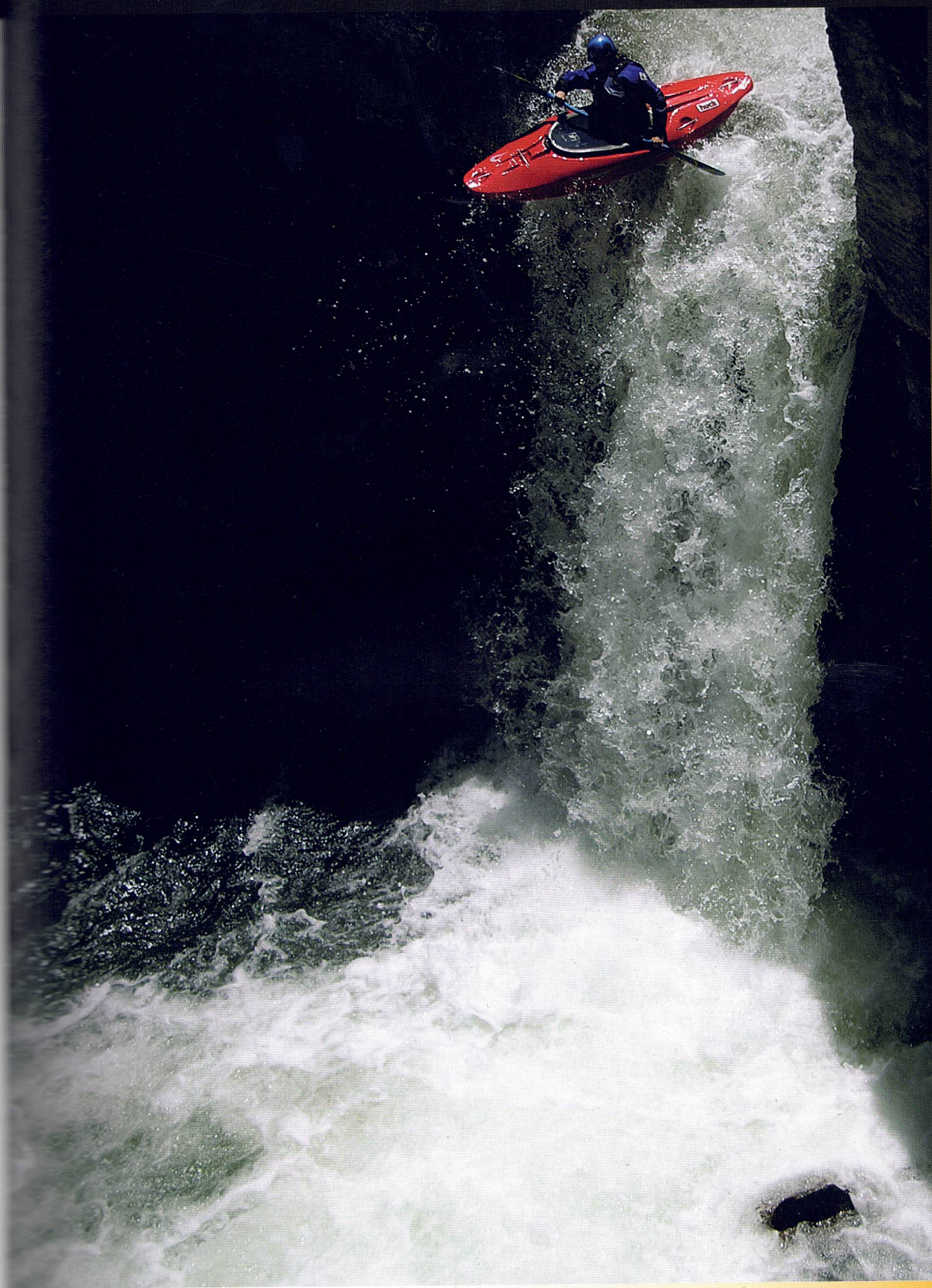
South Mineral lacks the status of a great stand-alone run, but its proximity to Silverton makes it great for combining a day with the various upper forks of the Animas (the feeder tributaries upstream of town) or with the first gorge of Lime. A strong group can start paddling after lunch and still get two runs in on South Mineral and two runs on First Gorge Lime before dark—even running your own shuttles. If you know that it's clean, South Mineral can make an okay pit-stop while traveling on Hwy 550.

Wood Problems: In 2005 this run was unrunnable due to massive wood issues from avalanches. Supposedly better now. At anytime a misplaced log can make this run a no-go, so bring a saw.

Directions

A few miles North of Silverton turn onto South Mineral Road from Hwy 550. Drive five miles to the second CG, avoiding tourists with ATVs, fishing rods, guns, and I Love NASCAR shirts. Continue past the CG and the Ice Lakes Creek tributary. Abandon all but one 4WD vehicle at the day parking area across from the CG, and continue about a mile past Ice Lakes.

A short and sweet 1/2 mile with a few drops that stack together at an impressive gradient, including the signature 20' vert, Huck the System.



Yonton Mehler Katie Selby Huck the System, South Mineral Creek

EVAN ROSS ♦ WESTWATER CANYON PUT-IN

Yampa Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	700	2000	5000	10,000
Character	off season jaunt	booze cruise	spilt beer	powerful currents
Class	III	III	III (III+)	III (IV-)
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	12 fpm			
Remoteness	very committed			
Hitchability	poor, but shuttle service with River Runners Transport (435-781-4919)			
Length	71 miles			
Season	April to June is permitted, but year round trips possible			
Gauge	Yampa @ Deerlodge Park			
Put-in	Deerlodge Park			
Take-out	Split Mountain Campground			

One of the most sought after desert floats in the region, the Yampa Canyon is a multi-day masterpiece of smooth sandstone oxbows, set in a prehistoric feeling, 2,000 foot deep canyon. Yampa is the Ute word for a wild herb (Carcum Gairdneri), dried and used for everything from food to medicine. While basking in the glory of this remote and wild canyon, you cannot help but feel a sense of connection to these early inhabitants, with pictographs, petroglyphs, and cliff ruins spanning multiple cultures scattered throughout the canyon.

While floating the big water class II (the exception being Warm Springs, class III) it is possible to spot a wide array of endangered animals, whose critical habitat you are merely passing through. The Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Colorado Pikeminnow, and Razorback Sucker all call the Yampa Canyon home. The Colorado Squawfish, a particularly large species (up to 6' long and weighing upwards of 80 pounds), makes the muddy waters of the Yampa its last known breeding grounds as well. All the more incentive to stay in your boat. I wouldn't want to be attacked by this endangered and possibly pissed about its loss of habitat monster.

A time-lapse video, from early spring to late summer, set up on a beach within the Yampa canyon, would tell the beautiful story of an unharnessed river. During peak run-off watch as the rollicking muddy water transports entire trees downstream, and anything else that edges too close to its banks. Take a look at the cottonwoods on the banks left standing. They have been worn as smooth as river rocks from the yearly cycle of spring floods, bringing life to the valley. Observe the waterline dropping slowly from August into September, exposing huge sand beaches and a river that can easily be waded across. The Yampa is the longest free flowing river left in the Colorado Basin and the recurring rise and fall is nothing short of magnificent. The fact that it has not been designated as Wild and Scenic is a political travesty. The permit system is not exactly ideal either.

Dan Piano ♦ floatin'

Permit: From the second Monday in May through the second Monday in July, getting on the river will require entering the permit lottery. Thousands of private permit applicants are turned away each year while commercial outfitter's permits go unused throughout the high use season. If you get lucky and receive a permit, you will have truly *won* access to as beautiful and as wild a canyon as can be found in the west. An off-season float can be a great way to beat the system, but it will still require a permit given out on a first come, first served basis beginning March 1st. For more information go to the NPS Dinosaur web page at www.nps.gov/dino/planyourvisit/privateriverrafting.html. An extremely thorough guide to the Yampa Canyon's multiple amazing side hikes, camp spots and rapids, titled Dinosaur River Guide, is available and recommended for those planning on making the journey.

Directions

The put-in is in Colorado off Hwy 40, on the far east side of Dinosaur National Park. Take Deer Lodge Park Rd to the Launch Site. The trip can be ended at the Echo Park Launch at the confluence of the Green and Yampa rivers, but your permit entitles you to continue on through the Whirlpool and Split Mountain Canyons of the Green to the most common take-out at the Split Mountain CG. This CG is found off of Hwy 149 just over the border, east of Vernal, UT.

THE YAMPA CANYON IS A MULTI-DAY MASTERPIECE OF SMOOTH SANDSTONE OXBOWS SET IN A PREHISTORIC FEELING 2,000 FOOT DEEP CANYON.

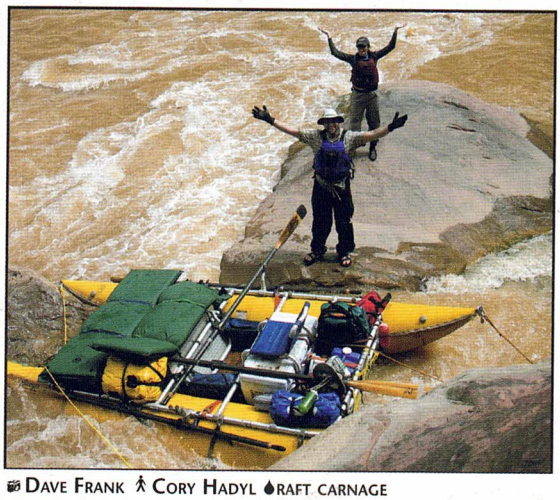
Gates of Lodore

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	800	1200	3000	6000
Character	small water	less sunny	more sunny	big water
Class	III	III-	III	III+
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	13 fpm			
Remoteness	high			
Hitchability	very poor, so call River Runners Transport for a shuttle (800-930-7238)			
Length	44 miles			
Season	year round is possible			
Gauge	Green River near Greendale, (use Green Riv near Jensen for the take-out flow)			
Put-in	Lodore Ranger Station			
Take-out	Split Mountain Campground			

The Gates of Lodore is a classic desert multi-day raft trip, replete with awe-inspiring geology, expansive sandy beaches, easy side hikes, and drunken horseshoe competitions at camp. The Green is tightly controlled by the Flaming Gorge Dam, often resulting in a minimal flow even in mid-June, until the confluence with the Yampa. But one shouldn't go on a Lodore trip for the promise of challenging whitewater, rather for the aforementioned limitless beauty and feeling of sheer freedom offered by such a trip.

Most groups spend between two to five days on this stretch. High verse low flows, as well as personal speed preference can weigh heavily on the time it takes to complete this 44-mile trip. Bring the sunscreen, coolers, beach games, and sport sandals for the numerous side hikes.

One hike brings you to an enormous rock with a cave opening at the bottom. The sand and blazing sun scorch you on the hike to the cave, which beckons with darkness and cool surroundings. Another hike features a waterfall. Have some fun plugging the flow from above and releasing it on friends below!



DAVE FRANK CORY HADYL RAFT CARNAGE

The rapids on the Green section will be more challenging to the rafters, as oarsmen and women will have to maneuver around big rocks. Low flow will often limit rafters to just one line. Notable rapids include Disaster Falls and Hell's Half Mile (which seems more like an eighth of a mile). Intermediate and even novice kayakers won't have any trouble.

At the confluence of the Yampa is Steamboat Rock, an enormous wall colored by desert varnish. Lots of whirlpools can catch the off-guard by surprise—very cool river hydrology in action. After the confluence the whitewater mellows to a few sets of wave trains, and soon the take-out arrives. Enjoy a self-guided tour of Dinosaur Monument's fossilized stream bank.

Permit: Submit your permit application prior to February 1st, at www.nps.gov/dino/river. It's basically the same rules and regulations as the Yampa Canyon permit, since both runs are located within Dinosaur National Park.

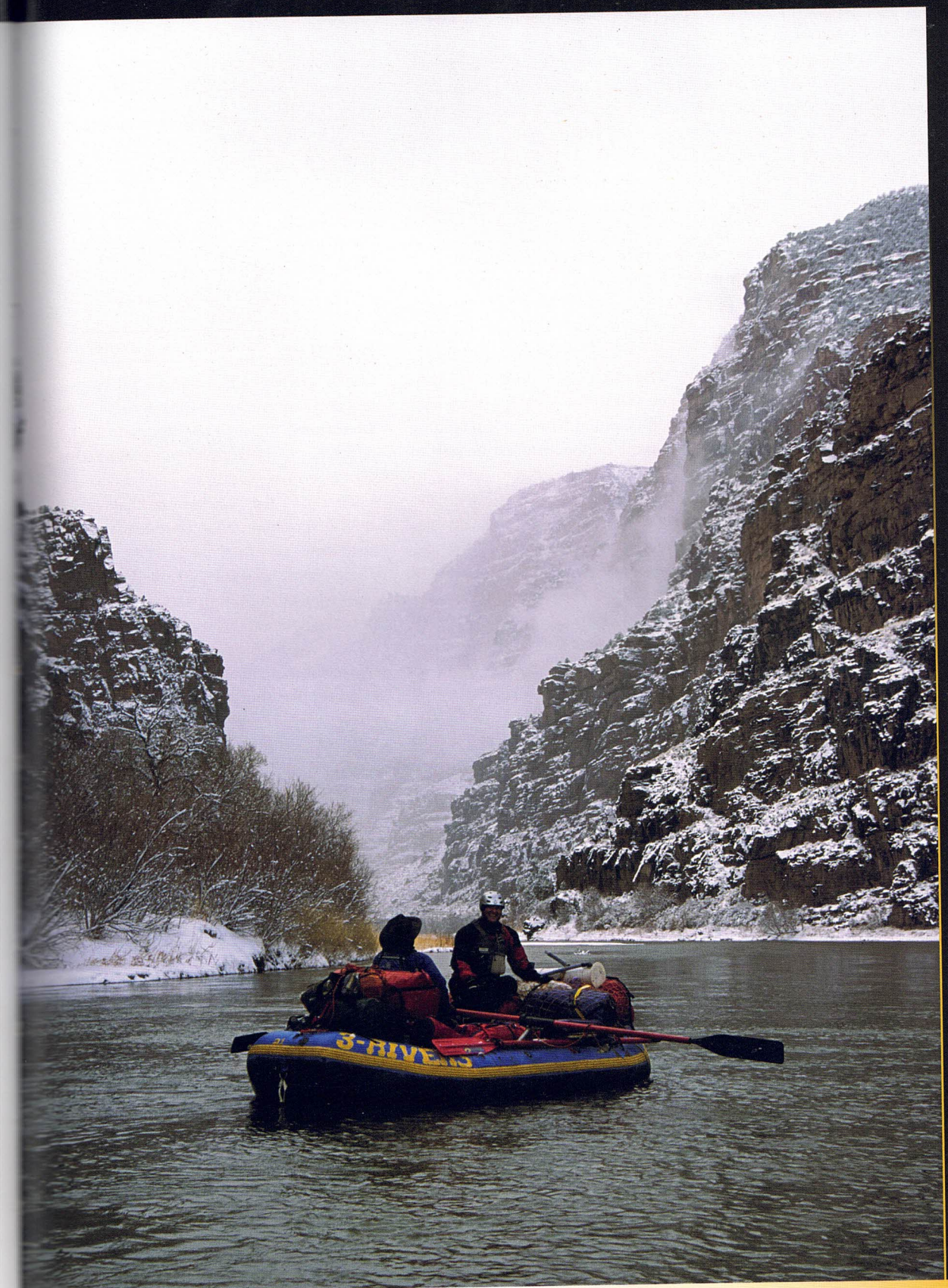
-Nicole Wigston

Directions

The take-out is at the Split Mountain CG, on Hwy 149 north of Jensen, UT. The longest of three shuttle options is a mostly paved, 305-mile trek leading through Maybell, CO. Take Hwy 40 east from Jensen, then head north on Hwy 318.

Two other shuttle options exist, and can cut the length to 250 miles or 205 miles. Both are impassable with rain or in early spring. Check out the mile-by-mile river guides for this section to get the full-scoop on shuttle options, and consider paying River Runner's Transport out of Vernal for a shuttle (800-930-7238).

Gates of Lodore is a classic desert multi-day raft trip, replete with awe-inspiring geology, expansive sandy beaches, easy side hikes, and drunken horseshoe competitions at camp.



Brad Modesitt Ian Beutler, Simon Lawler Lodore in the really off-season

White River Floats

The White River float sections flow in a westerly direction from Rangely, cutting through the high elevation desert of western Colorado and Eastern Utah before their demise into the waters of the Green River. This is the new Wild West, complete with encroaching ranch houses and the growing oil and gas industry. Although most of the evidence of the industrial presence is away from the river, the White River isn't admired as much as many of the other float trips in the region for its lore or river scenery.

Still, it's hard to go wrong when the place is permit-free, and trips can be as short as a high-water day, or a relaxed booze-cruising week. The sunsets are spectacular, the companionship will run deep, and the biggest concern is how to keep the keg chilled in the scorching heat.

The upper half of this run starts at the town park in Rangely, or five miles downstream at a public access point off of River Road. This cuts out some serious meandering and gets you to the best parts of the canyon sooner. Two days is common for this section. The drunken tanning session ends at Bonanza Bridge, but more importantly it's the start of another two days on the river.

The lower half of the float sections contain the most exciting ripples, and at flows over 1800 things can get more interesting with a few extra holes thrown in. Even for rowing novices the whitewater isn't too tough, except at lower flows when the risk of becoming beached or tangled in tamarisk is more prevalent. Breathalyzers will be used and tickets will be issued for any wrecked college rafts.

The BLM River Access is the preferred take-out, but it's only four more miles to the Mountain Fuel Bridge. Hell, it's only 20 more miles to the confluence of the Green River, so you might as well keep the college outdoor program rafts, send scouts for supplies, and continue on to Desolation.

CFS	500<min<1000<good
Class	II
Quality	★★★
Gradient	10 fpm
Length	37 miles + 34 miles
Season	April-July
Gauge	White Riv nr Watson
Put-in	Rangely
Riv Access	Bonanza Bridge
Take-out	Mountain Fuel Bridge

Directions: To get to the Mountain Fuel Bridge take-out (Ute Indian permit required), or the BLM access just upstream, head west of Bonanza, UT on a dirt road. The signs will lead you there, since there isn't much else to drive to in these parts. To get to the halfway point access, take Hwy 45 south from Bonanza and put-in under the south side of the bridge at the parking area. Put-in on River Road to the west of Rangely, or in town at the park. River Runner's Transport in Vernal offers shuttles (800-930-7238).

Upper South White

Billed as the longest shuttle in Colorado, one must imagine that the rewards are great for pulling off this one-day wilderness voyage. Unfortunately no one seems to know how great the rewards really are since it doesn't seem to have been run since the days of CRC—the original. It is certainly in beautiful country, as the South White traverses a healthy chunk of Flat Tops Wilderness and what's more, there are definitely some sections of stout gradient. The steepest section has been dubbed Plastic Canyon, bringing images of Ruby Anthracite to mind, but with only one possibly mandatory portage it is probably not on that level of a mank-fest bar fight.

The timing appears to be tricky with a high elevation access road (snow) and a short window (flows). The gauge is a barometer and has been estimated to be about three times the flow through the Wilderness section. With an optimal flow I'm betting that this run is a classic—but don't quote me on that. Some of the best caves in Colorado are near the river at the take-out, so spending a weekend in this region with caving specific headlamps and associated gear really *could* be an awesome adventure. Treat this run as a first descent and let us know if we should put it on the to-do list when you return.

CFS	900<best
Class	V+ (NR)
Quality	★★★★?
Gradient	365 fpm crux 120 fpm avg action
Length	13.2 miles
Season	June, July
Gauge	SF White @ Buford
Put-in	SF White Trailhead
Take-out	SF White CG

Directions: From Meeker, take Rd 8 to Buford and turn right (south) onto Rd 10 (FR 200). The take-out is at the South Fork Campground. The put-in is found by traveling back to Buford and then heading south on Rd 17 to FR 244 to Rd 245 to I-70 east (all the same dirt road to New Castle). Take I-70 to Dotsero and drive north on Rd 301, then left onto Coffee Pot Rd (Deep Creek Rd). Follow the signs for a long ways to Budge's Resort. Open and close the gate as you pass through to the South Fork Trailhead. Call the USFS in Eagle at 970-328-6388 to check the status of FR 600 to Budge's.

A MERE THREE RUNS ENCLOSE THE WHITE RIVER, AND SINCE MOST PEOPLE IN COLORADO DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE IT IS THE CROWDS ARE RARELY AN ISSUE.

STEVE KAHN ♦FRIENDS, BEER, CANOES, WHAT MORE COULD YOU WANT? BONANZA DOWN, WHITE RIVER

Desolation Canyon

CFS	900<min 2k<optimal<20k
Class	II-III
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	5 fpm
Length	85 miles
Season	year round (no ice)
Gauge	Green Riv @ Green Riv
Put-in	Sand Wash BLM Ranger Station
Take-out	Swasey Beach

Found in the area of the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation in northeast Utah, Desolation cuts through the relatively young rock of the Tavaputs Plateau. The water carries paddlers through typically five days of beach camps under cottonwood trees, towering valley walls, and rock spires that fill the vista. The mosquitoes can be intense, but it's a small price to pay for a river trip of this magnitude. It's even rumored that some Grand Canyon rafters use this as a test run of their equipment. Although I'm sure there are specific reasons for this, it mostly just makes for a good excuse to bail out on work for a week.

It's possible to see some of the last herds of wild horses in this region, but the riparian environment is much more obvious in this designated national landmark. The history of this area runs deep, with everything from Indian heritage, to wild west outlaws and settler homesteads.

The first 26 miles start off slow, so you'll have plenty of time to gaze up at the impressive Light House Rock. The action picks up at Jack's Creek and becomes much more common for the duration of Deso. Steer Ridge is the crux of this stretch.

Rock Creek is one of the highlights of a Deso Trip. The clear waters pour in from the west at one of the deepest points in the entire canyon. Homestead remains are near the mouth of the canyon. Further downstream the canyon walls widen, but are no less rugged in the area around McPherson Ranch. At times its possible to stop for riverside refreshments—but look for a welcome sign first.

Gray Canyon starts below here, named for the color of the Flagstaff Limestone that the river cuts through. The rock causes the rapids to be more spaced out, and makes the whitewater steeper when the riverbed does drop. Wire Fence, Three Fords, and Range Creek are the crux drops of this section, and the best places to find a good wave to surf. Camping becomes sought after in the last few miles above Nefertiti river access, and the road that parallels the Green River Daily. Most Deso trips encompass the top of the daily run and end with a take-out at Swasey Beach.

Permit: Information on how to obtain a permit, and all of the nitty-gritty details associated with the application process can be found at www.blm.gov/utah/price/riverinf.htm. This is one of the easier multi-day float trip permits to obtain, since any commercial trip cancellation becomes available to the public. Permits are required year round, and high use season is May 15 to August 15. A seperate Ute Ouray Indian Reservation permit is required to be able to access the river left side of the run.

Shuttle Services: Two options, and both are kind of fun and cost money, but save time. River Runner's Transport sets shuttles with your vehicles, but it may be more fun to utilize a charter flight with Slickrock Air Guides for $110 per person. The charter flight has weight limits, so its best if this is used mostly for people.

Directions: It's a 180-mile beast. West of Myton, UT on Hwy 40, turn south on a dirt road that labels the way to the Sand Wash put-in. The dirt road is long, and can get a little rough so its nice to have 4WD, but not mandatory. Take out on the Road-up-the-Green-River, which parallels the river to the north of Green River, UT.

Green River Daily (no beta box)

I don't know anyone that lives in Green River, UT, and I can't imagine that the town making the top 25 places to live list anytime soon. To its credit it does have a local river run to the north of town, and the Road-up-the-Green-River parallels the handful of small rapids, providing easy access to the class III goods. The most quality section is between Nefertiti and Swasey Beach, but paddlers can continue to Green River State Park. Watch out for the ugly hydraulics of the diversion dam three miles below Swasey Beach, and the only rapid of the run a short ways after that. The rest is meandering flatwater through the lush river banks in the Utah desert.

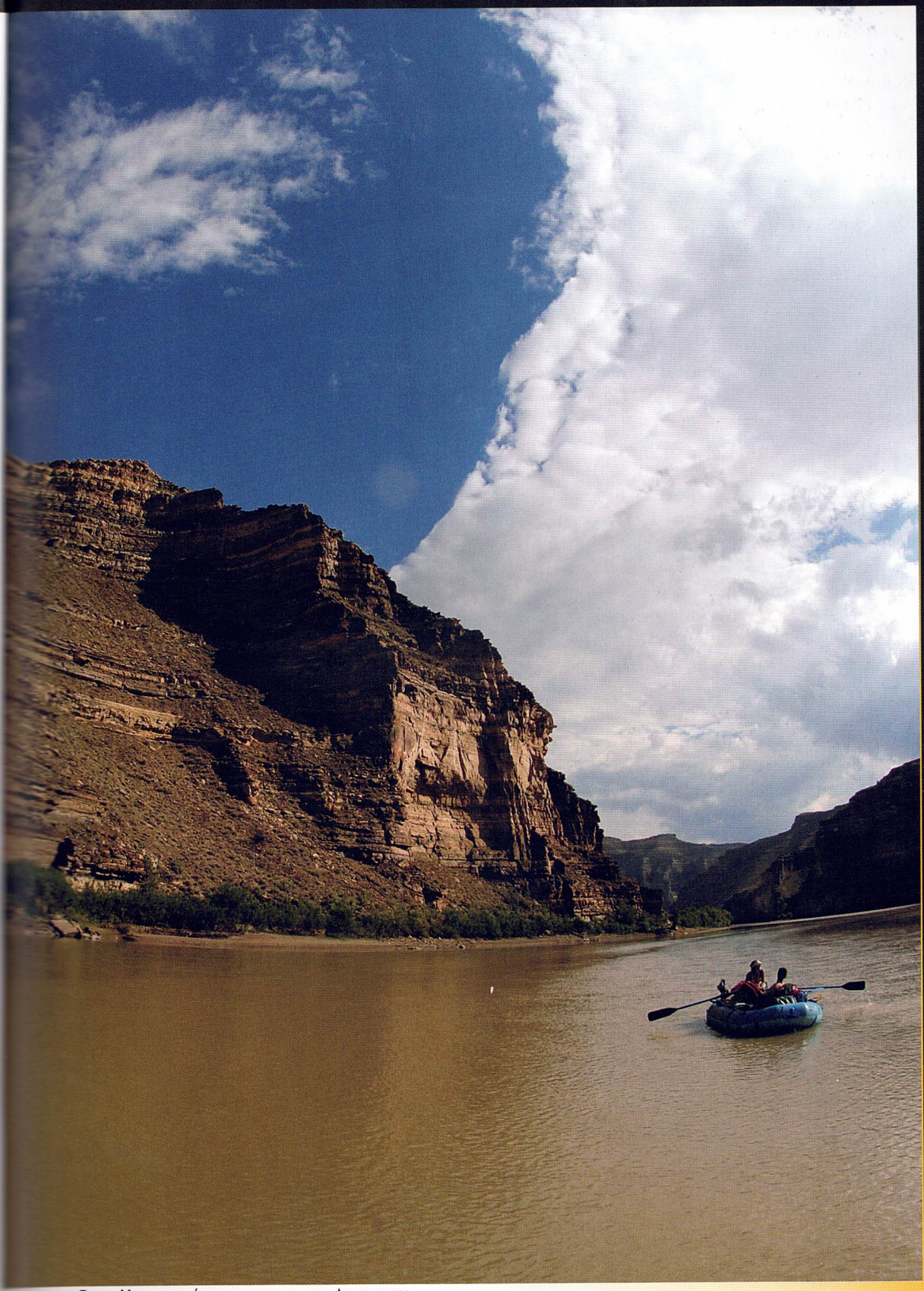
Price River (no beta box)

We know almost nothing about the Price River, but because you're somewhat likely to drive by it, we'll mention what we do know.

Put-in on a dead-end 4WD road to the east of Wellington, off of Hwy 6, and enjoy 24 miles of class III. A few rapids require rock dodging. Look for ample flows to make this scenic low-volume float worth it, and take out on the Green River Daily.

Need a class IV roadside fix? The Price River Canyon parallels Hwy 6, upstream of Helper, where a take-out can be found near the intersection with Hwy 191. Emma Park Rd works as a put-in. Tons of information is available in the Utah guidebook.

With 85 miles of desert floating, wild west sight seeing, and occasional nudity, it's safe to say that a trip down Deso doesn't suck.



Brett Hochmuth/eagleeyephotos.com ♦speechless

Westwater Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	1000	3000	8000	16,000
Character	off-season play	optimal play	juiciest level	quick swirly flush
Class	III+	III+ (IV-)	IV- (IV)	IV-
Quality	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Gradient	10 fpm avg, 20 fpm action			
Remoteness	very committed in spots			
Hitchability	poor, but you can use a shuttle service (see Loma) or bring the mtn bike.			
Length	17 miles (mostly flat)			
Season	year round when free of ice, lottery permit April 1st to September 30th			
Gauge	Colorado River @ UT/CO state line			
Put-in	Westwater BLM Launch Site			
Take-out	Cisco Boat Ramp			

Located in the barren desert to the west of Grand Junction off of I-70, just past the Colorado/Utah state line, the mighty Colorado River carves its way through a mix of red sandstone and black gneiss from the Precambrian Era. This is Westwater Canyon, arguably the most well known class III overnighter in proximity to Colorado (although easily run in a day). With whitewater that maxes out with one easy IV, kayakers will find that the majority of the excitement will come from surviving the interesting permit system, drunken wrestling matches at camp, resisting the temptation to drink beer from pressurized kegs between every rapid, and attempting to board the gear/beer rafts for the crappy six-mile flatwater stretch at the end of the canyon.

Rafters have it much more difficult, both with overall trip logistics (permit management, shuttle coordination), and with the whitewater that is generally unscoutable and walled-in, with only a few pools in the inner canyon that allow parties to regroup in the event of a flip. Fortunately, the lines rarely get any tougher than class IV-.

Thus, kayaker and rafter relations are developed on this river much as birds and elephants work together in Africa. The birds (kayakers) can swoop around the elephants (rafts), helping to clean up any mess that the elephants may get into by providing highly maneuverable safety. The elephants provide adequate replenishment to the birds by providing much needed beer, food, overnight gear, and a different kind of safety. Load up the freestyle boats onto the floating party barge, and enjoy the flatwater in style.

Once a party successfully negotiates the permit requirements with the rangers, the journey begins with a few miles of moving flatwater to mess around on. Heads up kayakers can take a river right side channel to enjoy some fun log splats and eddy lines before rejoining with the rest of the group at the start of Wild Horse Canyon (III). The play here is good, but the whitewater is rather easy/flat until the first significant rapid, Little D, where most of the desirable campsites can be found.

Below here the action slowly picks up as groups make their way down to Marble Canyon, where Paddle Snapper hole offers up great play at the river left lip. Staircase is next, a green wave that at certain levels allows for blunts and spins, but is tough to catch in modern short boats. Then the main straight-away starts with Big Hummer, Funnel Falls, and Surprise Rapid, all of which provide on the fly play, some big pourovers to boof or easily avoid, and interesting side channels and eddies to negotiate for kayakers looking for more excitement. Rafts will want to run all of these down the main flow.

Skull, the only IV on the run, comes at the end of this series of pool drop rapids and has a river left scout. The easy line is center right to left, avoiding Skull Hole on the

Kevin Sloan Scott Travis Little D Surf

SUPERB CAMPING, GORGED WHITEWATER, GOOD PLAY, WARM TEMPS, AND YEAR-ROUND PADDLING. WHETHER FOR A DAY OR TWO, WESTY IS WORTH THE TRIP.

BRAD MODESITT ♦BIG HORN CAMPSITE, BELOW THE WHITEWATER

bottom right. Far river right has some lines for kayakers that end near the Room of Doom, a place where rafts want to avoid.

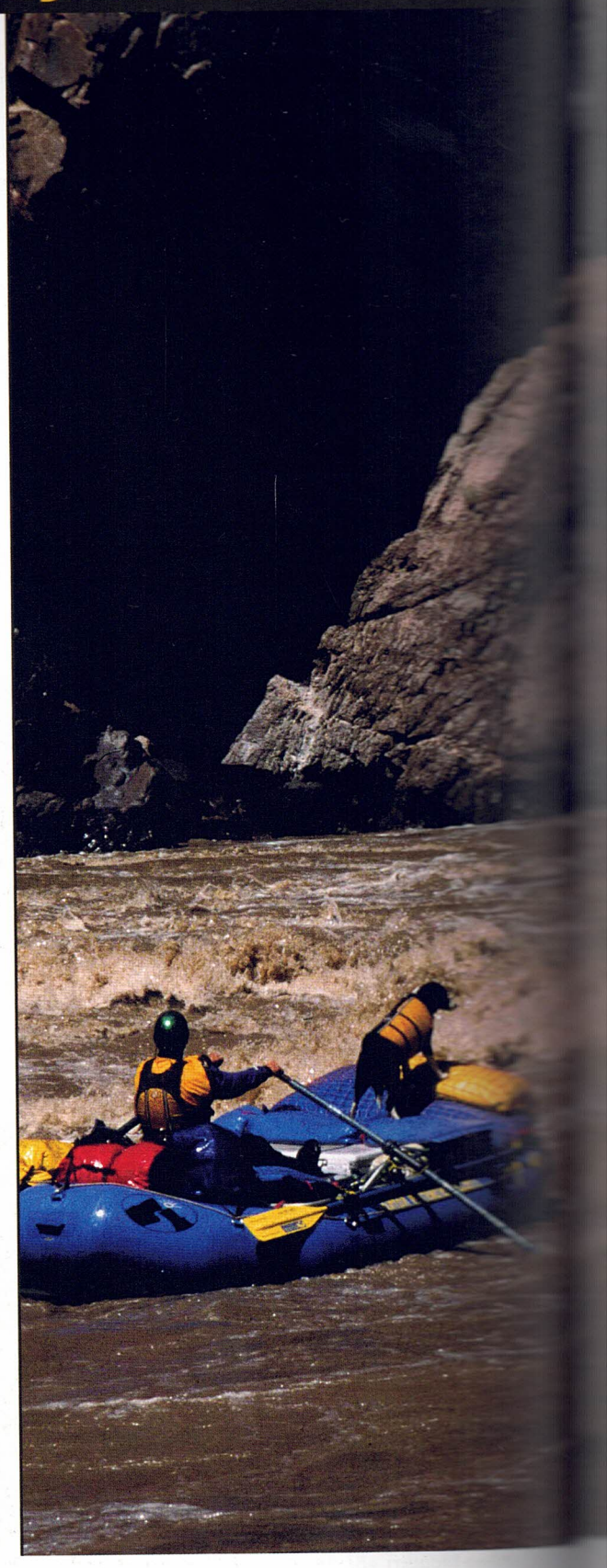
Below this are my favorite play spots, Bowling Alley and Sock it to Me. Bowling Alley offers exhausting eddy access with dymanic hole rides, although usually quick. Sock It To Me is usually the tallest feature on the run (second most feared rapid by rafts), with the Magnetic Wall to avoid on the bottom left. The brave kayakers will dare each other into surfing Sock, and the wavewheel into the hole is a crowd stealer. Last Chance is just below, with good on-the-fly wave-holes, and P.S. has a good eddyline on river right.

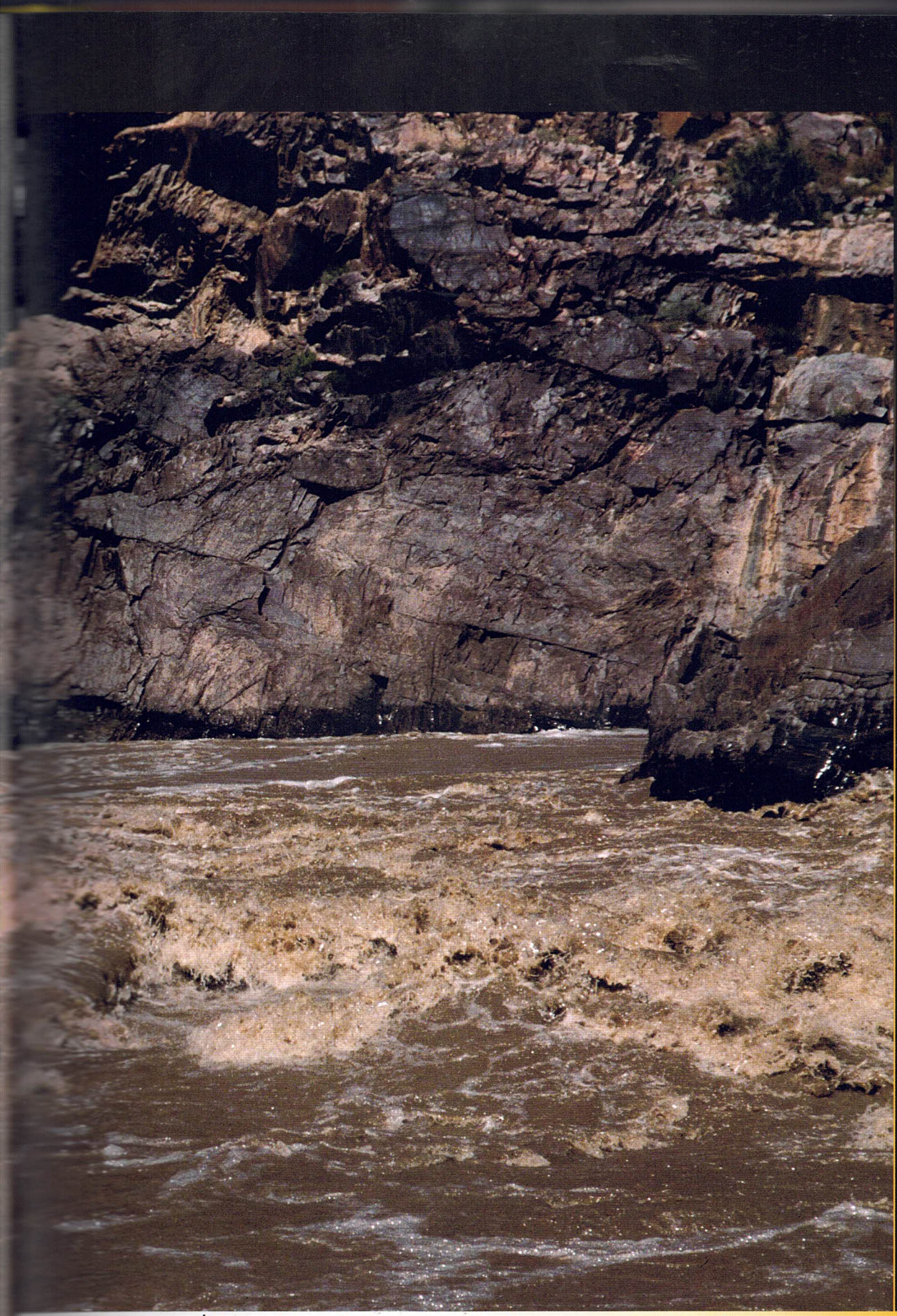
If the water is high (15k+), check out the very cool whirlpools on river left below the last rapids. The downtime is intense even in non-squirtboat designs, and this will be the reward for paddling a featureless, flushed out canyon.

Permit Information: A reasonable $7 per person is charged for the permit. Permits are claimed by calling 435-259-7012 two months in advance of a desired launch date. Off-season launch dates are easier to get, but still require a permit. Additional information can be found at www.blm.gov/utah/moab/ww-info.html. The permit system does an excellent job at preserving the natural resources of the canyon from the influences of overnight river trips. It is overly strict and unreasonable in managing groups of freestyle kayakers that choose to run the canyon in a day. Expect to stuff a latrine, breakdown paddle, and firepan into your six-foot long playboat—all for a run that will be over in a playful four-hours at higher flows. My other complaint about the permit system—you have to be over 18 years old, which hoses the angry youth of Junction.

Directions

Coming from Colorado, the put-in can be found from Westwater Exit 225, following the signs to the BLM Launch Site and Ranger Station. Coming from the take-out, use Ranch Exit 220 as a shortcut (except after rains), which from the off-ramp is found by turning left across the interstate, right onto the frontage road, and left onto a dirt road that loops back under the interstate. If headed to the take-out first, its convenient to drop off non-drivers where the Ranch Exit 220 road goes under I-70 and pick them up while driving this shortcut to the put-in. The take-out is reached by taking I-70 Exit 212 to Cisco (via Highway 128), and taking a left (at the long abandoned gas station) to go south of Cisco. Take the left fork to the river. Camping is most common at the put-in, but only allowed if you came with a permit, and only recommended if your party respects quiet hours. If this doesn't apply to you, camp near the take-out.





Brad Modesitt Aspen the Wonder Dog the runout to Skull Rapid, and the infamous Room of Doom

Known as one of the most classic mountain bike destinations of all time, with the epic Slick Rock trail and others, the town of Moab is a tourist friendly place. It's also small, can be a bit taxing on the meal budget, and brutally hot at the wrong time of year. I can remember one day in particular, where we actually didn't paddle because the thought of gearing up in 105° temps was unfathomable. The scenery is made up of fantastic desert rock, and the combination of a camping, floating, and biking trip can be a great way to spend the weekend. There are also a handful of afternoon options for the freestyle starved along the Moab Daily stretch, albeit limited.

Cisco to Hittle Bottom

CFS	2000<min
Class	I
Quality	★★
Gradient	5 fpm
Length	24 miles
Season	year round (no ice)
Gauge	CO Riv nr Cisco
Put-in	Cisco Boat Ramp
Take-out	Hittle Bottom or other

Putting in at the Westwater take-out (best for rafts), or at the Fish Ford downstream will lead into over 20 miles of scenic class I floating as the Colorado snakes its way through the desert floor, with sandstone cliffs and an occasional glimpse of the snow capped 13,000' La Sals in the background. The relaxing whitewater attracts much fewer crowds than the permitted Westwater upstream and the roadside Daily below, often leaving floaters with a solitary river experience. Some ranches bring paddlers back to civilization about six miles below Fish Ford, and Hwy 128 comes into view shortly thereafter. The Dolores flows in on river left just a few miles above the Dewey Bridge River Access, but most choose the ramp access at Hittle Bottom for the take-out, avoiding the more difficult II/III rapids downstream. Plan on two days for the 24 miles total, since the water moves at a slow pace the entire way, and unassigned campsites are available. A good side hike is found on river right below the Dewey Bridge, at Bull Canyon.

The National Geographic Moab Bike Map is a surprisingly good river map for rafters, and conveniently waterproof.

Directions: Use the Rose Ranch access at the end of the Cisco Pump House Rd (Westwater take-out) as the put-in for this run to maximize length, and for the excellent boat ramp. To reach the take-out, return to Cisco, hang a left, and then another left (south) onto Hwy 128 towards Moab. Use the Dewey Bridge river access, or the Hittle Bottom river access for a take-out.

Moab Daily

CFS	1500<min
Class	III-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	5 fpm
Length	33.5 miles (variable)
Season	year round (no ice)
Gauge	CO Riv nr Cisco
Riv Access	Hwy 128

Although still a mellow run, the Moab Daily contains more action (peaking at class III) than it's upstream neighbor. The entire stretch is roadside to Hwy 128, as it cruises through Professor Valley. The scenery, despite being roadside, is magnificent as the walls close in more than they do upstream. At high flows the play can really pick up, although none of it will consistently run at a five star level. Rafters looking for a multi-day float continuation from upstream can find good camping on river right below the Onion Creek Rd (the campsites are boat access only). The typical raft take-out is just above the Hwy 191 bridge, although groups looking for the most class III can choose to take out at Big Bend below the main action.

Kayakers looking for top-notch park-and-play will usually be disappointed. However, extremely high flows create an amazing wave in the rapid below Professor Creek—according to Moab paddlers over age 40. At medium-high flows a river access near Ida Gulch allows for an okay wave, but the eddy access is poor. The class III ripples and eddy lines throughout the river create a fun river for beginner kayakers, with multiple access points for those willing to do short scrambles from the roadside pullouts to rivers edge.

Directions: Hwy 128 parallels the entire stretch, with multiple put-in and take-out options for rafts and kayaks.

Labyrinth (no beta box)

A meandering and flat 68 miles connects the Hwy 191 bridge access to the Mineral Canyon launch. Little more than ripples are encountered on this ultra scenic stretch, but avoid rafts on this windy float trip.

Directions: Put-in at Green River, WY. To get to the take-out drive east on I-70 and turn south on Hwy 191, then right onto Hwy 313. From 313 take Mineral Canyon Rd and head west to the take-out.

BRETT HOCHMUTH/EAGLEEYEPHOTOS.COM ♦BASKING IN CATARACT

Cataract Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	3500	8000	28,000	40,000
Character	rare	hot play (surf)	hot play (vollyball)	cold play (swims)
Class	III	III+ (IV-)	IV	IV+ (V-)
Quality	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	16 fpm avg			
Remoteness	very high			
Hitchability	very poor, but shuttle service available—Sheri Griffith Expeditions (800-332-2439)			
Length	112 miles			
Season	year round (no ice)			
Gauge	Colorado River near Cisco			
Put-in	Potash			
Take-out	Lake Powell			

In the early 1960's, the Bureau of Reclamation Chief Floyd Dominy and the Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall were on a reconnaissance flight over central Utah. Dominy leaned over to show Udall where he wanted to build the *next* big dam. His finger pointed to the canyon directly below the Confluence of the Colorado and the Green rivers. Fortunately where Dominy saw a reservoir, Udall saw a National Park and in the coming months he set into motion the creation of Canyonlands National Park, providing the permanent protection of Cataract Canyon as a national treasure.

"Running the big rapids is like sex: half the fun lies in the anticipation. Two thirds of the thrill with the approach. The remainder is only ecstasy—or darkness." –Edward Abbey

These words should ring true to any river runner worth their weight in raft cargo. Abbey's poignant observation was most surely inspired by the Colorado River at peak flow as it courses through Cataract Canyon. The Canyonlands are some of his most storied and reveled in landscapes and I can only imagine what the Monkey Wrench Gang would have done were the BLM to have attempted the construction of the aforementioned dam. If you've ever sought to immerse yourself in the red rock desert that moved Abbey so deeply, than Cataract Canyon is for you. It is also the official hangout for Moab river rats of all ages and craft type, so running into one of Abbey's old cronies or any variety of the eccentric canyonland environmental activists is a distinct possibility.

Brett Hochmuth/eagleeyephotos.com ♦Mushroom lasagna anyone?

Beginning on either the Colorado or the Green River, boaters will float for multiple days or motor for the better part of a day to the confluence of these mighty western waterways. Both floats are extremely scenic and can easily lull a barged up raft party into a zen-like state of relaxation as 1000' Wingate and Chinle Sandstone cliffs, arches and other formations drift past. Pictographs, petroglyphs, granaries and small dwellings, remnants of the Freemonts, and the nomadic early inhabitants of the Canyonlands dot the walls and side canyons throughout the journey.

Shortly below the confluence there are a variety of fantastic campsites at Spanish Bottom on river right. The first campsites allow the easiest access to the Doll House, an epic red rock playground of miniature slots, caves and wild formations to tickle your imagination. A well-worn mile-long trail leads to the canyon rim and location of this magical Doll House. Around the corner below the first official rapid, Number One, is a picturesque white sand beach camp that is optimal for horseshoes, beach volleyball and bikinis. You can still access the Doll House via an extra mile or so of upstream riverside hiking to the earlier camps and then up the trail.

The rapids are all numbered sequentially from the top of the canyon to the bottom. They are generally big water class III with a hint of class IV at moderate water levels. Rapids #5 and #10 cause the most concern of the first 20

"Running the big rapids is like sex: half the fun lies in the anticipation. Two thirds of the thrill with the approach. The remainder is only ecstasy—or darkness." –Edward Abbey

Brett Hochmuth/eagleeyephotos.com ♦Cold water, hot days and hot guides

Cataract Canyon

rapids, especially for rafters. Advanced kayakers will be looking for the playspots in here. Rapid #10 has an awesome play wave with monster escalator eddy service that is prime between 7,000 and 10,000 cfs. The best level for the most freestyle is at flows of 8,000 cfs or less. The crux comes in rapids #21-23, affectionately referred to as Big Drops 1-3. Below the crux there is still some great play to be found, especially at lower flows. At high water the waves get bigger and the rapids flow together more causing concern for uninitiated big-water paddlers. Things still only top out at class IV for the crux and class III for most of the rest, but the consequences increase, with much longer swims possible for those who experience separation from their watercraft.

The rapids of Cataract Canyon instilled a greater fear in early explorers such as John Wesley Powell than those of even the Grand Canyon. The possibility of flipping a river craft in one of the many easily avoidable but gigantic holes is a constant worry. The pioneers of Cataract had to negotiate a great many more storied and difficult rapids that are now buried beneath Lake Powell, so stop stressing the whitewater. Pack your dry bags and get ready for an amazing river voyage.

Permit: A permit is required to run Cataract and the choice of flatwater access options requires a lengthy trip or a motorized approach. There is no lottery for river permits, but reservation requests must be made at least two weeks in advance of a trip. Permits are available after the first business day in January for each calendar year and there are no daily launch limits in Canyonlands, so there is no need to submit multiple requests for the same date. If you submit a request, you will get a permit. Permits are issued Monday through Friday from the Reservation Office in Moab, and may be received in advance by mail. When the Reservation Office is closed, the Island in the Sky Visitor Center can also issue river permits. The cost per permit as of this writing is $30 and the group size limit is set at 40 people. To request a permit go to www.nps.gov/cany/planyourvisit/reservations.html

Lake Powell Take-out: Lake Powell Reservoir since 2002 has been drained to a point far below its normal level. Due to the decreased reservoir levels, what used to be a windy paddle out from hell has morphed into a swift float below the last whitewater at Imperial Rapid to the take-out. Camping below Imperial Rapid is limited, especially for large groups. Many former camps are now perched on dried mud flats 20' to 30' above the river so plan to spend your last night before the paddle-out somewhere within the last few rapids of the run.

Directions

An old access road on river right is now being used for a take-out. This road leaves Highway 95 between mileposts 41 and 42, just downstream of the Dirty Devil River. The ramp has been graded and provides two-wheel drive access to the river. Cut banks may prevent boaters from backing trailers into the river. For current take-out conditions, contact the Canyonlands Reservation Office by phone at 435-259-4351, or email at canyres@nps.gov. The regular take-out at Hite Marina is closed. However, fuel for boats or motor vehicles may be purchased 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at the service station (located in front of the Hite convenience store) by using a credit card at the pump. Most Cataract trips put in at Potash, west of Moab on Hwy 279 along the Colorado River. Paddlers wishing to float the Green can put in at Mineral Bottom. Drive north of Moab on Hwy 191, and turn left on Hwy 313, which leads to Mineral Canyon Rd, and to the Mineral Bottom put-in.

Brett Hochmuth/eagleeyephotos.com "Rollin', rollin', rollin' on the river" -Creedence

Escalante River

CFS	50<min<400<amazing
Class	III- (Ps)
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	20 fpm
Length	73 to 90 miles
Season	May, June (peak)
Gauge	Escalante @ Escalante
Put-in	Calf Creek
Take-out	Lake Powell

This is the premiere adventure float-and-drag in this book. Armed with inflatable or hardshell kayaks, camping gear, and leave-no-trace supplies, people of all experience levels go out of their way to complete a voyage through some of the most impressive 73 miles of creek in all of Utah. The numerous side hikes (over a dozen of which are listed in canyoneering guides of the Colorado Plateau), lush springs, and towering cliff walls epitomize the desert-scape of southern Utah. The recommended seven-day (minimum three days), self-support trip can be filled with skinny dipping, hiking, and pristine camping—all of which should wet your tongue, tan your skin, and cleanse your soul.

The muddy water is popular among adventurers, and many paddlers look for a mere 50 cfs. Expect a number of people on this stretch of canyon that is rapidly growing in popularity, and is up for Wild and Scenic designation. Increased regulation and a new permit system may well be on their way, but hopefully it will resemble a system similar to the Zion Narrows—free to boaters, and more peaceful when the water is high than when not.

The typical river enthusiast should look for the highest of annual flows, peaking around 700 cfs in the good years. Anything over 400 cfs should signal an immediate drive to the desert, west of Lake Powell. Once on the river, any sign of civilization vanishes into a prehistoric world of rock and water. Leave ample time for side hikes along clear water tributaries and shaded chasms. Over a dozen of some of the most amazing slot canyons in Utah connect into the Escalante River. Pick up a hiking guide and plan on a weeks worth of kayak-supported slot-canyoneering.

As for the whitewater, basic class III skills will see paddlers down in enough control to portage any wood, and keep the boat straight enough to bang through the rocks and miss most of the brush. High flow will mostly just smooth things out, although once the flow gets over 1000 cfs, the uncharacteristic conditions could make things more interesting. There is always a risk of flash flood. Perhaps the much larger danger is the level of commitment once in the canyon. Escape is not an easy prospect were something to go awry.

Two standard take-out options exist, and neither the boat shuttle nor the hike-out to 4WD desert road are convenient.

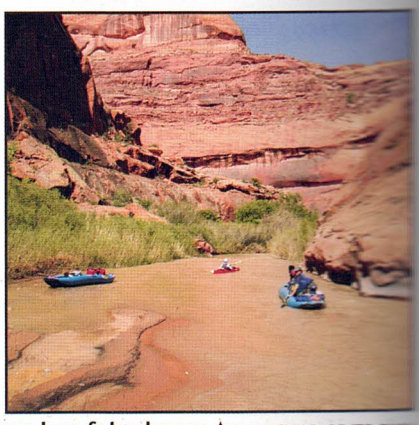
Hike Out: Coyote Gulch to the Crack-In-The-Rock trail, and eventually the Hole-In-The-Rock Rd. Hikers must scramble over exposed narrow ledges and trudge up an 800 foot sand dune in the approach to the crack. Crack-in-the-Wall is a hairpin slit in a sheer cliff just below the canyon rim. The 30' cliff will require a rope to pull the gear up, and people with a large build are going to have trouble squeezing through. Plan most of a day around this process. Many groups end up making two trips.

Boat Shuttle: For $112 per hour, a group of six can get picked up at the mouth of the Escalante River. The clincher is that a typical round trip can take 4-5 hours, and with boats and gear its better if its only four people. I'm sure prices could change, but the cheaper boat option may be to higher a friend—or tack on a couple of days for a very long paddle out to Bullfrog Marina (434-684-3062). What the cost doesn't include is the navigation of the manmade Escalante River delta, which encompasses as much as 20 miles of river depending on the level of Lake Powell.

Larry's Advice: The 3.5-hour, two boat shuttle cost our group $836, but split six ways, the price tag seems a bargain compared to tackling the hike out from hell. Also, it's very convenient, and even cost-effective considering time and gas on personal vehicles, to employ the same company at the marina to shuttle boaters back to the put-in. We did this and it worked great. Drive right to marina, dump your gear into their truck/van, and they take you to the put-in. At trip's end, hop in your own vehicle and you're done. So sick.

Permit: A free Backcountry Use Permit is required, and can be obtained at the Escalante Interagency Visitor Center. Check out www.ut.blm.gov/monument/recreation-activities-river-running.php for the most up to date information.

Directions: Put-in at the Calf Creek recreation area, 15 miles east of Escalante on Hwy 12. Parking has been an issue, and if the small lot is full it may be necessary to get shuttled from town. The Bullfrog Marina is on every map. From the put-in, take Hwy 12 west and then turn south on Hole-In-The-Rock Rd, and continue for approximately 43 miles to the end of the Forty Mile Ridge Rd. Deep sand will likely require 4WD to navigate, and is prevalent in the last few miles of the drive.



Larry Rice Larry Laba & Jeff Josephs in a world of its own

THIS 73-MILE FLOAT-AND-DRAG SELF-SUPPORT ALLOWS FOR ENOUGH SKINNY DIPPING, HIKING, AND PRISTINE CAMPING TO WET YOUR TONGUE, TAN YOUR SKIN, AND CLEANSE YOUR SOUL.

LARRY RICE 🚶 JEFF JOSEPHS ♦ESCALANTE CANYON SOLITUDE

Lower San Juan

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	500	1200	4000	8000
Character	off-season float	desert float	ripples	big ripples
Class	II	II	II+	III-
Bluff Quality	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★
Goose Quality	★	★★	★★★	★★★
Gradient	8 fpm			
Remoteness	high, but the river offers mellow escape			
Hitchability	poor			
Length	27 for upper, 57 for lower			
Season	year round, permits for March through October			
Gauge	San Juan near Bluff			
Put-in	Sand Island Launch or Mexican Hat			
Take-out	Mexican Hat or Clay Hills			

The Lower San Juan is a desert lovers dream. Mostly flat with a few class II rapids, the river is popular among open canoeists and inflatable kayakers (the boats not the kayaker), as well as rafters with kids in tow. Even Tom Cruise likes to cruise down the San Juan when he is not saving the world. The river cuts deep into the sandstone and often has enough water to boat year round.

Boaters can choose between an upper or lower section or combine them for an 84-mile week-long journey. The lower section is not as appealing as it used to be, due to sand deposits caused by the backwaters of the devastating Glen Canyon dam, but it's still worth doing because of the side hikes. The average June air temperature is 93° F, while the average water temperature is a balmy 73° F. Its safe to say you can leave the dry top at home.

Bluff to Mexican Hat

This 27-mile section is a popular weekend trip for Durango and Moab boaters. The scenery is outstanding as is the camping. If you are looking for whitewater you should look somewhere else, but there are couple class II rapids to enjoy. You can find petroglyphs and pottery shards without even trying (please leave them in place for others to enjoy). You might also find trash from upstream towns in New Mexico (Toss No Mas Amigos!). If you have room in your boat please pack it out.

Mexican Hat to Clay Hills (Goosenecks)

This 57-mile section is very similar in character to the section above Mexican Hat, but has better side hikes. I took my seven-month old daughter through the crux rapids at 3500 cfs while she slept, so there isn't much to worry about.

There are some very good side hikes to check out. The Honaker Trail, at mile 44 from Bluff, goes all the way to the canyon rim. Slickhorn Canyon has some amazing swimming holes and is accordingly a highly sought after campsite. Grand Gulch at mile 70 is also worth exploring.

Once you reach Grand Gulch the river starts to slow way down because of the slack water created by the dam. Your progress becomes agonizingly painful in the relentless Utah sun and you will openly curse the dam builders for what they have done. Have a beer, you'll feel better—and keep rowing!

Apparently in the nineties a deadly 35' waterfall formed below the Clay Hills take-out due to the shifting waterbed caused by silt deposits. It's supposedly gone now.

Mexican Hat: Its advisable not to leave vehicles at Mexican Hat, although you can pay one of the business owners for more secure parking. This is a thoroughly delightful and bizarre place. The town is largely made up of Mormon ranchers, but our lunchtime waitress was a supermodel blonde from Sweden who abandoned her tour bus when it stopped in Mexican Hat.

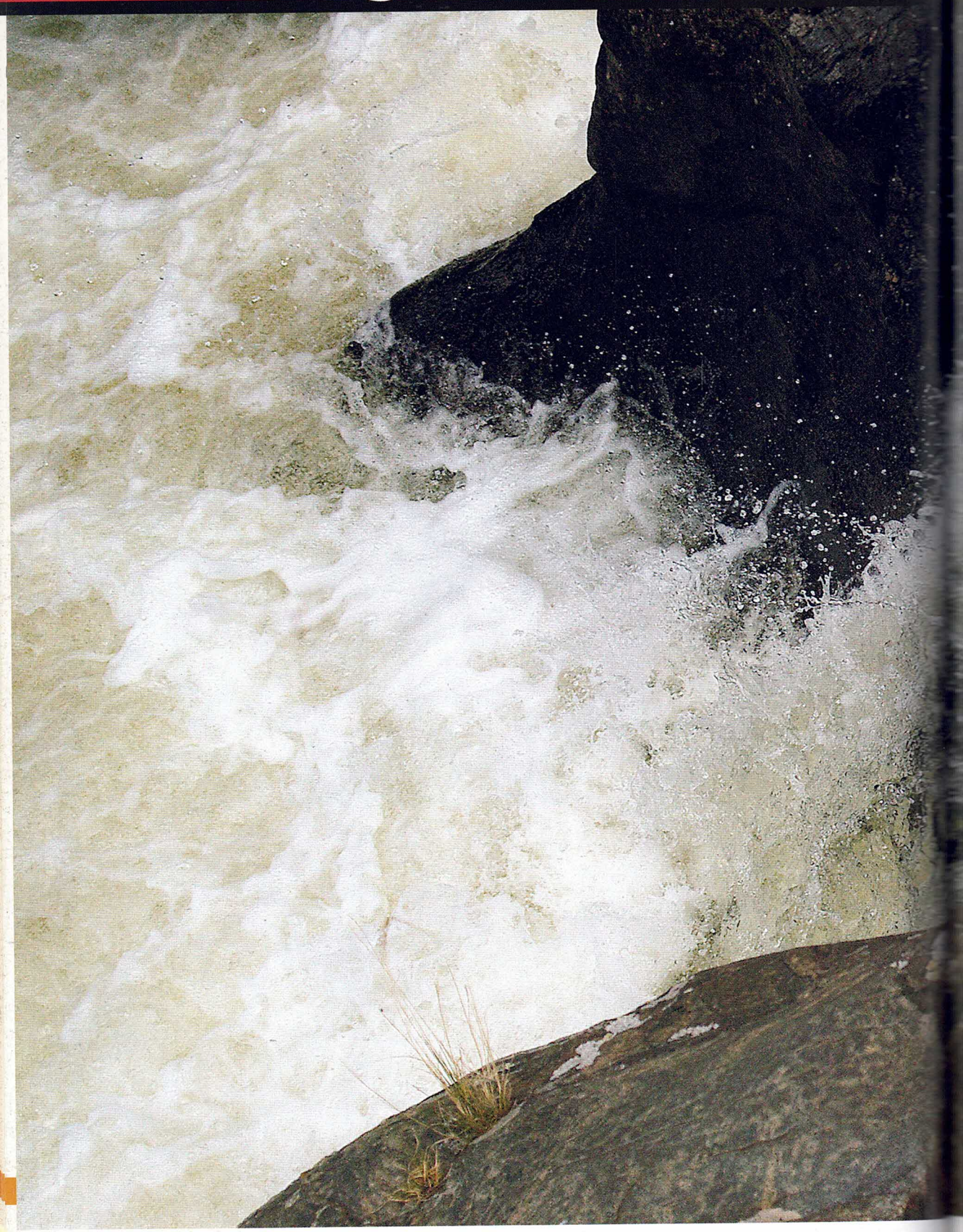
Permits: They're required between March 1st and October 31st. However, you need to apply before February 1st to obtain the necessary documents from the BLM. Apply for the river permit at www.blm.gov/utah/monticello/river.htm, and if you plan to hike or camp on river left, then go to www.navajonationparks.org/permits.htm to get the additional Navajo Reservation permit.

-Dana Kopf

Directions

The top put-in is three-miles west of Bluff at Sand Island Launch. Continue on Hwy 163 west to Mexican Hat at a BLM launch point. To reach the Clay Hills take-out, take Hwy 261 north to Hwy 95 west to Hwy 276. Then take Whirlwind Crossings Rd south, and then Rec Rd 430 to Lake Powell.

The average June air temperature is 93° F, while the average water temperature is a balmy 73° F. It's safe to say that you can leave the drytop at home.



ES Will Rawstrom The Slot, North Saint Vrain

Eldorado Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	90	140	200	240
Character	bony steep mank	steep hard mank	pushy, tight action	max descent
Class	V	V	V+	V+ (NR)
Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★
Gradient	350 fpm			
Remoteness	center of climbing world			
Hitchability	easy, or walk the shuttle			
Length	3/4 miles			
Season	April, early May, July—not peak			
Gauge	South Boulder Creek near Eldo Springs			
Put-in	upper picnic area			
Take-out	near park entrance			

Eldorado Canyon is the expert park-and-huck gem of the Front Range. Although only ¾ of a mile long, the action here is as fast paced as most paddlers will ever want, with a short warm-up quickly building into the first vertical drop of eight feet. The drop is easily recognized by the square rock it pours over, creating a miniature room behind the falls. A tricky peel-out to a narrow spine-drop follows, and ends in the last left eddy above the notorious Harmon Falls.

This spine-drop should determine the level if the gauge hasn't already, or more likely if you failed to look at the gauge. If you get slammed into either one of the walls and are thankful you brought your elbow pads, then Harmon will be at a manageable level. If you boof the hell out of the drop and miss every rock in sight, then be sure you know what you are getting into.

Harmon Falls is a highly impressive and relatively short three-stage drop. Most of the trouble happens in the first plunge, a tight, steeply angled slide that goes vertical at the last second as it banks against the left wall. Although cleaning the first drop is recommended, it isn't mandatory to make it down the rest of the falls as long as paddlers recover quickly. The second drop isn't much of a drop, but rather a bony channel from river left to right that serves as the set up for the final ten-footer that is obvious by the dire consequences of a left-side line.

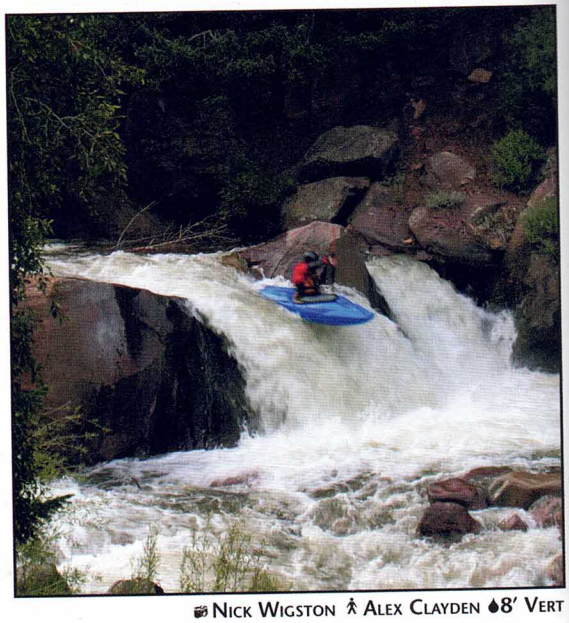
Don't celebrate too soon, because the runout to Harmon is arguably the best and most head's up action of the run with pourovers and holes coming at you faster than a hooker on East Colfax. Salvation is in the far left flow of the multi-channel cascade below, where a hand sneak/portage awaits.

If you've cleaned the top then enjoy the following dam-drop to spine-boof to s-turn slot with an angled slide at the end. And yes, the dam drops below are all runnable with the proper setup.

At minimum to low flow expert kayakers can expect to find an afternoon class V special that is manageable because of its rockiness. At higher flows look to portage Harmon, and make the rest of Eldo the grand finale to LSB. Or just run it all at high flow and scare the shit out of yourself in less than 10 minutes of paddling.

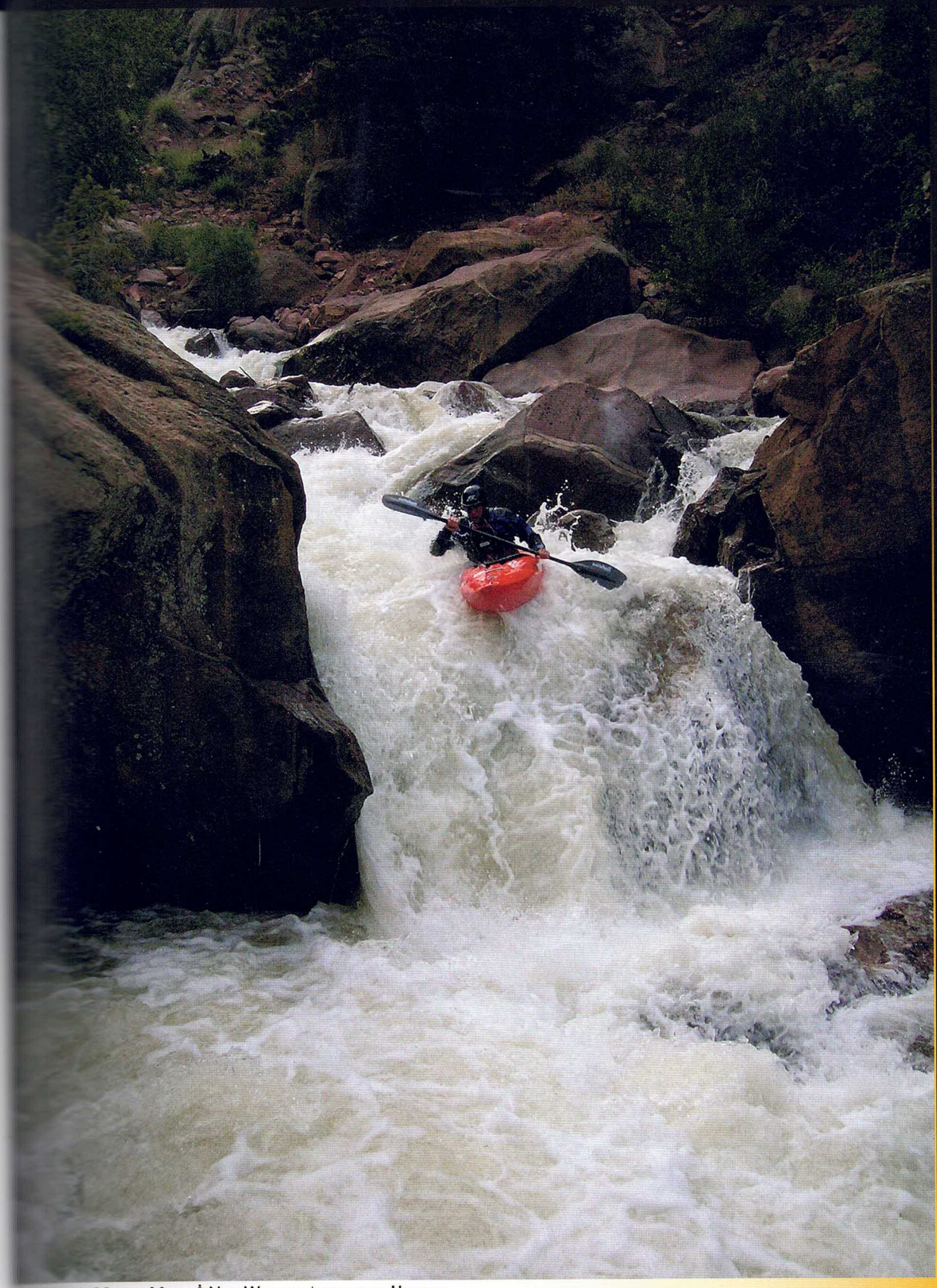
Directions

Take Hwy 170 west from Hwy 93 south of Boulder, until it dead-ends at Eldorado State Park. A Colorado State Park Pass or day fee is required to enter the park, but unlike typical park rangers, these rangers actually like kayakers. The put-in is at the top picnic area, and the take-out is at the entrance gate (or just downstream of the last dam).



Nick Wigston Alex Clayden 8′ Vert

A raging torrent of whitewater attracts creekers to Eldorado Canyon with stacked cascading drops and tough full-speed lines—the perfect Colorado park and huck.



Melissa Mora Nick Wigston bottom of Harmon

Lower South Boulder

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Gross Res CFS	180	260	400	600
Character	shallow	cushy drops	filled-in, juicy	waves & holes
Class	IV- (V-,V)	IV (V x2)	IV+ (V-, V+, V)	IV+ (V, V+, V)
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	140 fpm			
Remoteness	high, but near a trail			
Hitchability	very poor			
Length	6.5, not including Eldo			
Season	May, June, July (dam control)			
Gauge	South Boulder Creek below Gross Res above dam drop, Eldo gauge below			
Put-in	below Gross Res Dam at an unmarked trailhead			
Take-out	Upper Eldo Picnic Area above Eldo section			

Lower South Boulder (LSB) is the forgotten aspiring creekers run of the South Platte drainage. Overshadowed by its southern sister Bailey, LSB sees very few descents despite its 6.5 miles of semi-continuous III-IV whitewater in a beautiful and relatively remote Front Range canyon.

Despite a stigma about being very dangerous, the canyon encloses very manageable whitewater with only three significant drops, all of which are regularly portaged. The first drop, Moist Slot, comes immediately after crossing under the first foot-bridge of the Walker Ranch Trail. The most often run of the three, Moist Slot has a long lead-in with a sticky hole at the exit. Brain, the most significant elevation drop of the entire run, is rarely run due to an ugly invisible sieve in the center left of the drop combined with a bony lead-in. The Bridge drop is routinely clogged with logs in the entrance resulting in a full or partial portage.

Take away the three major drops, and you'll find a very fun, manageable, and forgiving whitewater run of III-IV grade, with the only significant draw back being the long shuttle. Paddlers interested in the larger drops will be happy to know that Moist Slot is an excellent rapid as long as you hit a well-timed, delayed boof on the bottom hole. When clean, the Bridge drop (also known as Martin Gulch) is a fun option A or B boof into a crack, with a screaming exit around a right hand bend and the only serious obstacle being the hole on the bottom left side. The Brain is an always-ugly novelty drop that is almost always portaged, even though a right line exists.

Paddlers willing to drop into LSB will find a forested run with rapids similar in difficulty to the in-between stuff on Bailey, a slightly more remote canyon, and fewer crowds.

Four miles down is a 30' high diversion dam at the end of a small reservoir, and it's tradition to make first timers run it without scouting. Run five feet off the wall, keep it straight to avoid getting stuck in the hole and whistle once you clear the bottom (because at higher flow paddlers stuck in the hole have experienced the boater shish kabob). The con of the dam is that it will take away about half of your flow, but it's a short ways to the take-out, and the start of Eldo.

Brook Aitken Stacey Johnston 30' dam drop

Directions

Drive south of Boulder on Hwy 93 and take Hwy 170 west, until it dead-ends at Eldorado State Park. Continue through the park to the take-out at the upper picnic area. A Colorado State Park Pass or day fee is required to enter the park. To get to the put-in, drive back out to Hwy 93 and go south to Hwy 72. Head west up the Coal Creek Canyon road until you reach Crescent Village, and turn right on 77S. Continue a ¼-mile past the bridge that crosses the river, and park at the right pull-out, where an unmarked trail leads down to the river.

American Whitewater

By Kevin Colburn

How can you not love the rivers in this book? How can you not love the sparkling water, the snow-capped peaks, the desert canyon walls, the allure of the unknown gorges, and the feel of carving on your back yard wave? These places have changed your life, forged your friendships, and fuel the spark of future adventures that makes your life a little crisper each day. For you, and the rest of the paddling community, the rivers in this book are places of significance. They are your places.

American Whitewater is an organization of paddlers who share a special connection with whitewater rivers and their watersheds. We were founded in 1954 by paddlers witnessing the loss of their own special rivers to dams, development, pollution, logging, mining, and other environmental impacts. These people realized that their headwater streams, tucked away in deep canyons, lacked a public voice and were thus at high risk of exploitation. Paddlers rallied and became that voice. American Whitewater was born out of a necessity for one loud voice for the paddling community and for the rivers we cherish. In our fifty years, American Whitewater has helped the paddling community protect hundreds of rivers, many of which are in this book.

At the heart of this book lies Colorado, where in the coming years paddlers will face some of the greatest challenges our community has ever met. Cities throughout Colorado and the West are competing for water from headwater streams, and projected shortfalls are inspiring new schemes for putting rivers in pipes. The worst access laws in the nation, combined with sprawling development, threaten to block rivers from public enjoyment and thus from public concern. Dozens of other issues put pressure on whitewater rivers, ranging from forest management to mine remediation, from road building to city zoning. Beneath our boats, and all around us, is a rich ecosystem supported by the rivers we paddle. No one is in a better position to recognize and react to threats to this ecosystem as paddlers are.

American Whitewater is here to help. We'll work with paddlers and anyone else that is willing to protect the rivers you care about, but we can't do it alone. We ask that you help out by joining American Whitewater as a member, by signing up to volunteer for specific rivers or issues, and by responding to our action alerts. Other than that, just do what you can to take care of yourself, your friends, and the environment surrounding you while you are on the water.

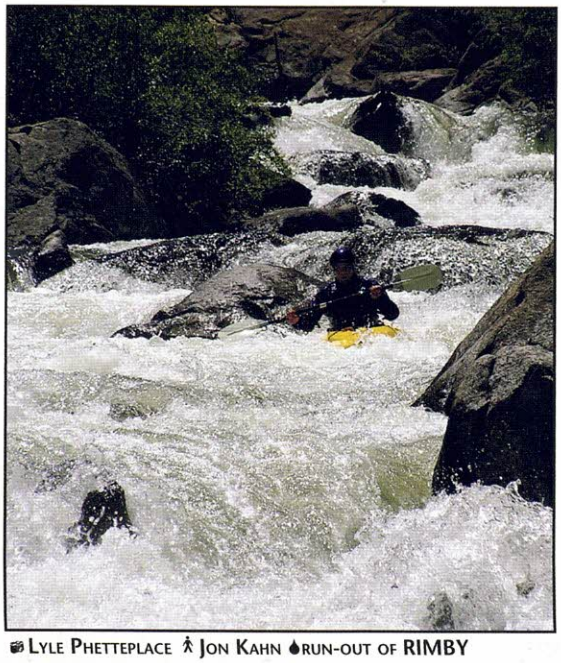
DARREN LIVINGSTON WILL, ADAM, BRIAN GETTING A TICKET, NO LONGER AN ISSUE, BUTTONROCK RESERVOIR, NSV

Upper South Boulder

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	200	300	450	600
Character	sievey & pinny	filled, manageable	what guide?	scary, LZ at 800+
Class	V (NR, Px2)	V+ (NR, Px2)	V+ (Px3)	NR (P, NR, P)
Quality	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Gradient	230 fpm, 320 fpm crux			
Remoteness	possible to get out, but far from easy			
Hitchability	beyond very poor			
Length	2.6			
Season	May, June, July (plumbing dependent, not too high)			
Gauge	South Boulder Creek at Pinecliffe			
Put-in	Pinecliffe on Hwy 72			
Take-out	Gross Reservoir Inlet Trailhead Parking			

One of the original and most notorious Front Range hair runs, Upper South Boulder Creek (USB) inspires an up-swelling of fear in some of even the area's most ardent creek boaters. USB should not to be taken lightly. One elder statesman once coached me in the art of running USB, "just keep it straight, keep it straight and you should be fine." Though this run is challenging, it does not always need to be a life or death experience. At the appropriate water levels and with a few prudent portages, USB is a highly continuous and quality class V run.

For Denver and Boulder residents USB is close to home. With plumbing from Moffat Tunnel this run frequently finds runnable levels throughout most of the spring and summer. Planning for a run through Upper South Boulder will depend on your familiarity with the run. First timers without a guide should expect to spend 4-7 hours although this run is less than three miles long. Conversely, experienced teams that know the run can route it in an afternoon, especially at high flows. Everyone should come prepared to extract a pinned boat and/or boater on this run, as relatively few runs go without incident. Fast and shallow technical boating leads into well, more fast and shallow technical boating at flows under 350 cfs.



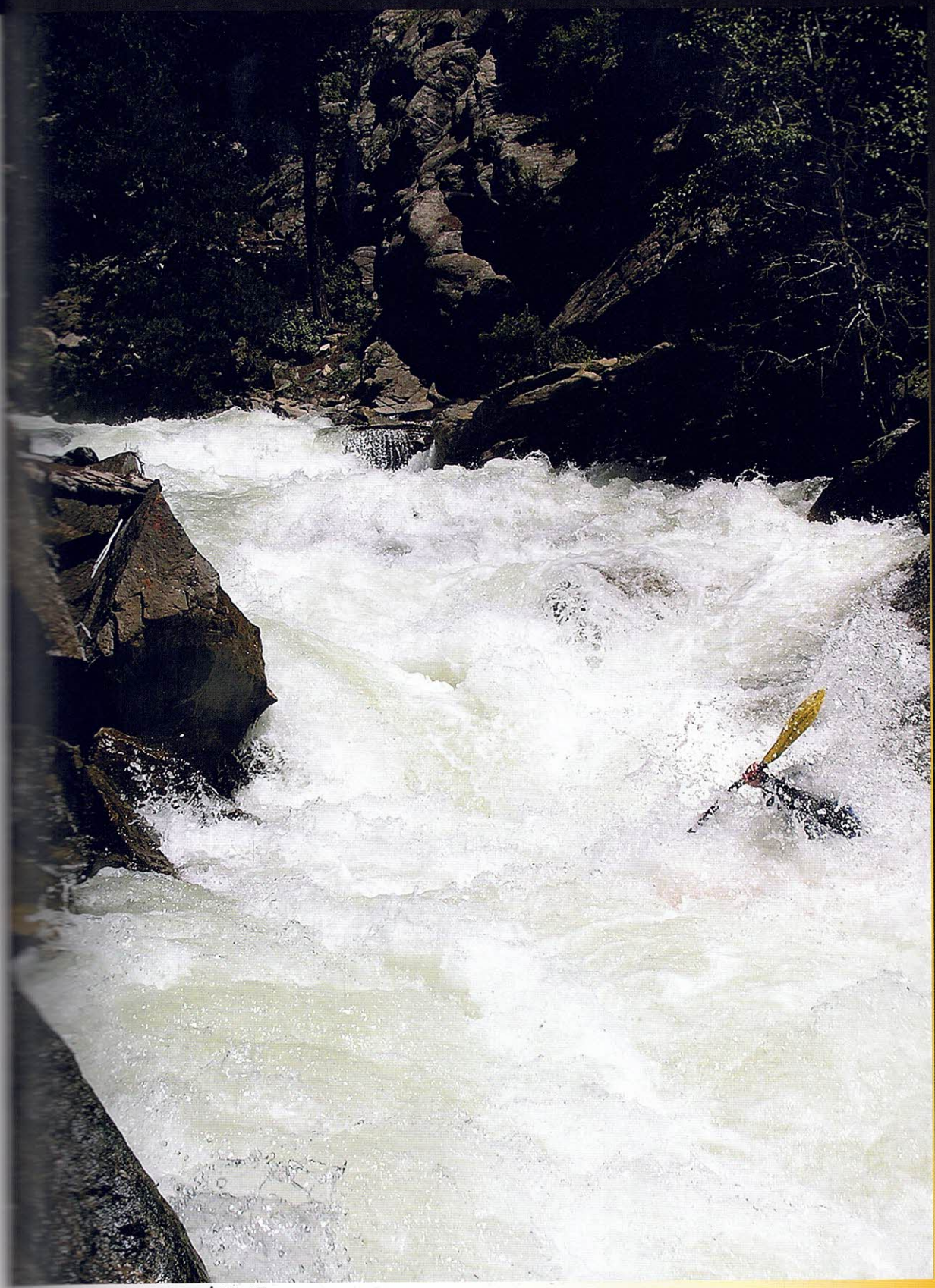
LYLE PHETTEPLACE 🚶 JON KAHN ♦RUN-OUT OF RIMBY

Coast in neutral down the west side of Wondervu Hill and revel in the spectacular vistas of the Indian Peaks as you try to calm your nerves before the put-in at Pinecliffe. Float for a few hundred yards over a few small diversions and gauges until you reach a looming train trestle overhead. Scout on the right and negotiate Trainspotting, a nice warm-up rapid that is only deserving of a name because it is the first whitewater that you encounter. Anywhere else on the run and Trainspotting would be relegated to the "in between stuff."

Boat scouting ensues as the riverbed steepens. This is where the real action begins and it rarely lets up until you reach the placid waters of Gross Reservoir some 700 feet of stout gradient below you. Scout on the right when you feel a wild left turn approaching. This turn marks the lead-in to the ugly sieve rapid known as Gash. Most will portage Gash, so use caution in your approach to this deadly rapid. Set safety and know the line if you are planning a descent. Lumberyard follows and constitutes classic heads up keep-it-straight creeking.

S-Turn shows up next as a significant horizon line. Exit the creek immediately after S-Turn on the right, and at high flows have people in the take-out eddy to grab off-line boaters. During the following portage you can eye the long cascade below which, culminates in a 40' stair stepping falls into a gnarly landing zone (LZ). It's been run at insanely high flows of 850 cfs, but I would personally

One of the original and most notorious Front Range hair runs, Upper South Boulder Creek (USB) inspires an up-swelling of fear in some of even the area's most ardent creek boaters.



Lyle Phetteplace ⛹ Ian ♦Trainspotting—the gatekeeper to the gnar

recommend the portage (and not dropping into USB at 850). Cheers to those who have and who will make this descent in the future.

Intense read-and-run follows in the form of Grand Piton National Park for just under the next mile. Scouting parts of this section may result in your pin kit and/or throwbag remaining safely stowed behind your seat. Be heads up for the trees that were intentionally cut down and laid across the river in this section to serve as a foot bridge. There is a very large eddy on the left, and it will be the easiest and quickest portage of the day.

The final rapid of the day RIMBY (Right In My Back Yard) doesn't have a good eddy, and leads into a hard to miss undercut followed by more of the continuous and steep technical goodness all the way to the reservoir. To scout RIMBY eddy hop on river right until you see a monstrous house-sized boulder on river left in the distance which guards the aforementioned underwater cave. Get out here and trudge through the thick brush until you can see the technical entrance that tries to force you under the rock. The standard line is a shoreline portage around the undercut, and a seal launch back into the fray. The long runout of RIMBY delivers you to the most relieving flat water paddle out in the entire book, a now legal one mile tour across Gross Reservoir to the take-out.

Directions

Take Hwy 72 west to Crescent Village from Hwy 93 between Golden and Boulder. Turn right onto Rd 77S following the signs to Gross Reservoir and the Inlet Parking area. This is the take-out. Get back onto Hwy 72 west and drive slow to the USB bridge at Pinecliffe. Put-on.

Alto Alto

Alto Alto is one of the best class IV stretches of paddling near Boulder once it gets over 400 cfs. Located at the upper reaches of South Boulder Creek, the run is surrounded by strange displaced mountain folk—which although probably nice, should be approached with caution. Once on the river the scary influences of man are never completely forgotten, with a run that suffers from a bit of blast rock and an early take-out above a bridge. Putting in about a mile upstream of the Hwy 119 bridge is the norm, but some paddlers choose to put in higher-up, which contains more private property, fences, and manmade intrusions. The highest sections also contain a great 1/4 mile of manky creeking of the IV+ variety.

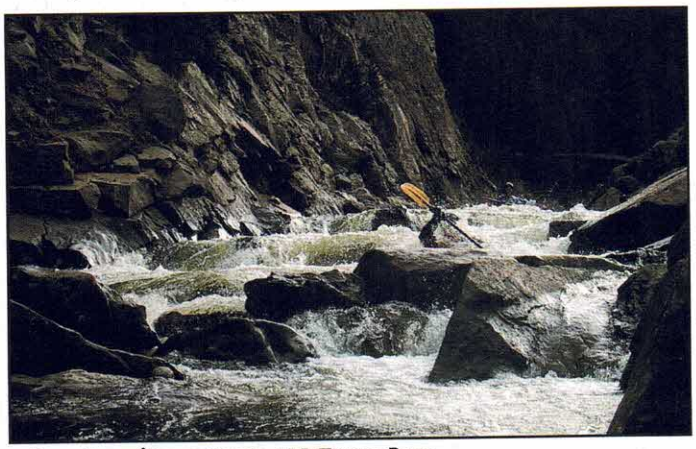
Paddlers get two miles to adjust to the freezing-cold water temp, and to stretch the arms before the class IV stretch. Long wave-trains and some creek-style boulder gardens get padded out nicely, and at high water the symmetrical holes can get stompy, making separation anxiety a possible issue for some. Paddlers that make it through will be left with class III for the remaining few miles.

The railroad bridge encourages an early take-out, although kayakers can continue on to Pinecliffe, which requires ducking the bridge on the very far left and a few other low bridges. Although this run can be done as low as 200, trust our recommended minimum of 400, and ideally look for higher levels to make it fluffier.

CFS	400<min<500<good 800<sweet
Class	IV- low, IV+ high—crux
Quality	★★★
Gradient	80 fpm
Length	5 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	S Boulder @ Pinecliffe
Put-in	Hwy 119 bridge
Take-out	above RR bridge

The short length of the crux action, combined with a chunky riverbed tends to keep rafters and class V kayakers away from this stretch, since the main draw to this run is the whitewater. Which is exactly why class IV paddlers will flock here for the intermediate action. At higher water, the on-the-fly surf waves get good.

Directions: To get to the put-in, drive west on Moffat Tunnel Rd (16 Rd) from Rollinsville for about a mile. Put-in at the first bridge that crosses the creek. To get to the take-out, head north towards Nederland and turn right on Hwy 72. As you head down Hwy 72 towards Pinecliffe you'll see the creek enter on your right. Take out at the dirt parking lot next to the first bridge.



Brett Faike Jamie Elasser RR Tunnel Rapid

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Boulder Creek

Boulder is the freakish result of what happens when you mix the prestigious upper class, a leftover hippy turned go-green social scene, and a bunch of seasonal college kids—many of whom are attracted to the areas excellent outdoor opportunities, or maybe just girls and beer. Trendy underground bars and café style restaurants offer excellent kayak après fare, but it all comes with a price tag. The traffic is constantly cramped, requiring a pre-planned route to get through town and to the river, and the relatively close quarters of the place tend to get people a bit edgy at times. All of that said, the population is healthy and good looking, the party and concert scene crazy, and the paddling options excellent with South Boulder Creek, Boulder Creek, and the neighboring Lyons options, all within an afternoon trip—or even an occasional lunch break when flows are good.

Boulder Park & Town

CFS	150<min<400<good
Class	III @ park & high flow
Quality	★★★
Gradient	60 fpm
Length	variable
Season	June, July, Aug?—night releases in the winter
Gauge	Boulder Crk @ Orodell
Put-in	Eben G Fine park
Take-out	park or downstream

Eben G. Fine Park is the center stage of the Boulder Creek run in town. Located to the west of everything except the canyon, it is the most common place to meet other paddlers, rollerbladers, and inner tubers (one notable creek boater even owns a tube rental company). The park has a reputation for being a bit trashy for beginners, and the main feature, Widow Maker, is an aptly named three' ledge that can be especially brutal for anything except mystery moves or boof practice with the feeble boyfriend. Look for higher flows to maximize the boof and eddy catching options, while limiting tuber traffic. It's a great setup for learning to kayak, but not for learning to freestyle.

Downstream of the park is a surprisingly good urban creek, although still small in nature. Only two obstructions, or should I say distractions require special attention—taking the right channel under the Broadway Bridge (the left becomes an irrigation ditch), and staying focused on the whitewater rather than the eye-candy utilizing the bike path that parallels the entire run. The whitewater starts off with class III at the park, and mellows by a grade once past the Broadway Bridge. Some good surfing can be found at high flow.

Directions: The Eben G. Fine Park can be found on the west end of Arapahoe, with parking just downstream of where the road links into Hwy 119 (Canyon St). Hiking is easy on the bike path. Take-outs are numerous and generally accessed via Arapahoe, the earliest at the Library upstream of Broadway, the Fish Aquarium near 28th, Scott Carpenter Park just upstream of 30th, and Jose Muldoon's near 38th.

Lower Boulder Canyon

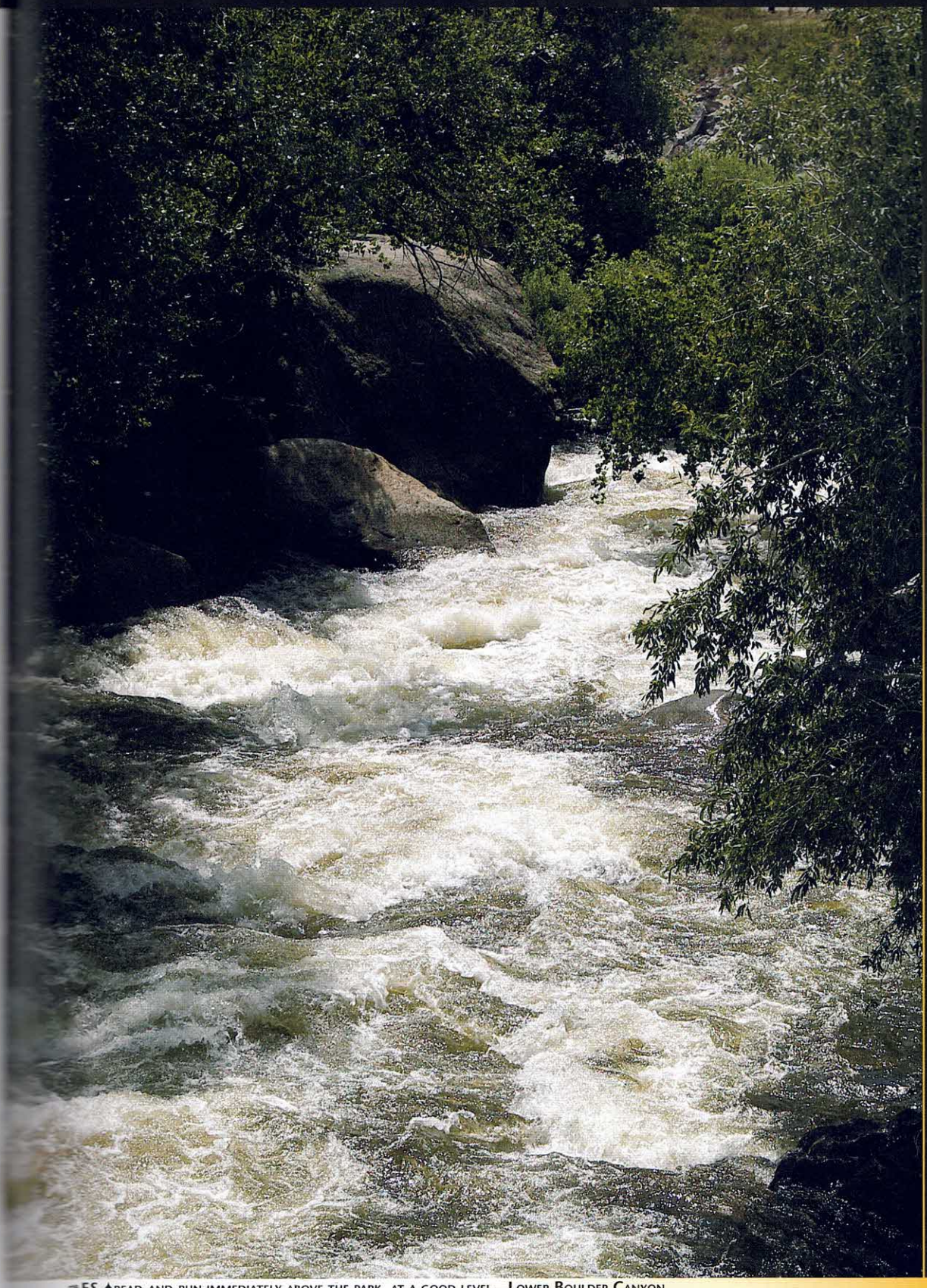
CFS	200<min<400<ideal
Class	IV (IV+, P @ Red Lion)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	155 fpm
Length	6 miles or 2.2 quickie
Season	June, July
Gauge	Boulder Crk @ Orodell
Put-in	below Blue Bridge
Take-out	Eben G Fine park

The road and occasional residence take precedence in the Boulder Creek Canyon, squeezing the creek in typical Colorado fashion. The blast rock is sharp and noticeable at low flow, and overhanging trees get exciting at the preferred levels of 400 or more. It's a great quickie for the action starved, and isn't as difficult as the rest of the immediate after work creek options—but it requires more water to really get going. Once it does, this is the most convenient class IV of the area. The preferred put-in is found shortly below Blue Bridge, but a short stretch that avoids the only portage of the run can be had by launching at Four Mile Canyon. Both options include the crux Elephant Buttress Rapid.

Paddlers immediately drop into good class IV before things mellow for the next few miles. A diversion dam requires a good boof in here to avoid a slightly sticky hole, located where the road goes through the tunnel. Be heads up for Sugarloaf Rapid (IV) near Sugarloaf Rd (optional put-in), but everything is navigable until reaching the Red Lion. The driveway into the Red Lion crosses over a deadly set of underwater culverts requiring a mandatory portage. To float into this unknowingly would be disastrous, and it isn't a bad idea to scout the portage eddy upstream of mm 38.7. It's manageable class IV leading up to it, so most intermediates will likely still prefer to put in up top to get the full six miles of action. Paddlers concerned with the culvert situation should put in one mile down at Four Mile Canyon.

From the Four Mile Canyon put-in (which is also the start of the bike path), the creek bed is less boat abusive, and the best whitewater of this section is encountered. A 1/2-mile from the edge of the canyon is

BOULDER IS THE FREAKISH RESULT OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU MIX THE PRESTIGIOUS UPPER CLASS, A LEFTOVER HIPPY TURNED GO-GREEN SOCIAL SCENE, AND A BUNCH OF SEASONAL COLLEGE KIDS.



■ES ♦READ-AND-RUN IMMEDIATELY ABOVE THE PARK, AT A GOOD LEVEL—LOWER BOULDER CANYON

Elephant Buttress Rapid, a IV+ that I highly recommend running upright. Inverted runs get ugly, so consider the scout (mm 40.0 is parking, mm 40.2 is the rapid). A small weir is clean, found just downstream.

River Stewardship Note: There has been a recent trend of college inner tubers drowning on this stretch. If these types are spotted, consider dishing out the swift and stern recommendation against committing suicide.

Directions: The entire run parallels Hwy 119. Typical put-ins are downstream of Blue Bridge near mm 35, Sugarloaf Rd at mm 37.5, or Four Mile Canyon at mm 39 (downstream). Take-out at the park, or dirt pull-offs along Canyon Blvd nearby.

Middle Boulder Canyon, Cobb Rock

This is a 1/2-mile long section starting at Cobb Rock, an obvious river obstruction spotted by the huge rooster tail shooting into the air, directly next to the road. It's V+ hairball that derives most of its excitement from trying not to piton in the manky whitewater, but if you really need a few minutes of gnar, then this is the Boulder after work special. The last drop is a sketchy S-turn with an undercut in the middle that should be approached with caution. If planning on running from the Upper to the Park, then consider this a ½-mile long portage.

Directions: Put-in at Cobb Rock, a ¼ mile above the Blue Bridge, near mm 34. Take out below the Blue Bridge near mm 35.

CFS	200<min<400<best
Class	V+
Quality	★
Gradient	steep
Length	1/2 mile
Season	June, July
Gauge	Boulder Crk @ Orodell
Put-in	Cobb Rock
Take-out	below Blue Bridge

Upper Boulder Canyon

This is the most quality class V whitewater in all of Boulder Canyon. Park at the Boulder Falls Viewing Area and put in a few hundred yards above the confluence, where the action will start off quick for this mile-long stretch. Once Barker Reservoir starts to spill this section comes into its prime, with high flows of over 400 cfs creating high-quality V-. There are two main drops to be concerned with, the first of which, S-Turn, comes early in the run. The Dapper, a sweet triple-boof is found near the end. Both can be pre-scouted from the road. This makes for great creeking with the continuous IV+ read-and-run between the drops.

Directions: Put-in just upstream of the Boulder Falls parking lot near mm 33. Take out at Cobb Rock, a ¼ mile above the Blue Bridge near mm 34.

CFS	200<min<400<best
Class	V-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	305 fpm
Length	1 mile
Season	June, July
Gauge	Boulder Crk @ Orodell
Put-in	Boulder Falls
Take-out	Cobb Rock

NF Boulder Creek, Dream Canyon (no beta box)

This is the major gay hangout of the Boulder area, and if the stream side scenery isn't captivating enough, the 680 fpm of this 1.5-mile section should be. Look for flows around 100-150 when attempting this V+ stretch, being heads up for the occasional NR and one mandatory portage. At times, running the steep mank may be less scary than portaging next to the two nude guys having intercourse in the eddy. All of the rapids are named based on the stream side environment, but most are too inappropriate for print. Expect wood (both kinds) and other unnatural debris in the streambed. It's one star quality at best. Be wary of bells.

Directions: Put-in off of Hwy 72. Take-out above Boulder Falls, and portage down to the parking lot.

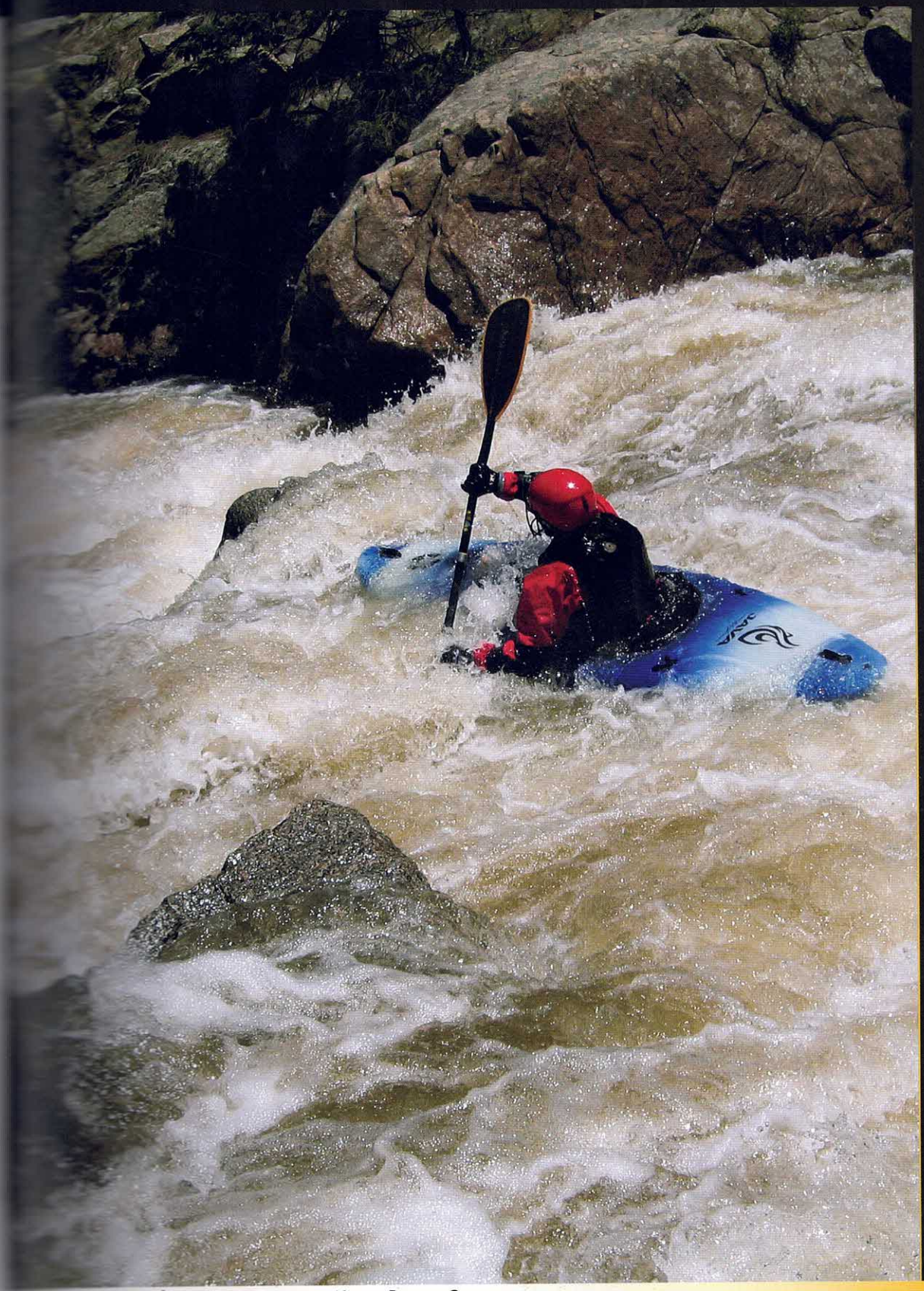
Upper Upper Boulder Canyon (no beta box)

If sanity has escaped the mind, then check out the V+/NR whitewater on the Middle Fork (the fork that parallels the Hwy), just above the confluence where the obvious Boulder Falls is located. I was once informed by Forrest Noble that, "It's a lot like Eldo, but steeper and mankier." Whatever psycho. Few people run this, and the quality rating is low.

Directions: Take out at the Boulder Falls viewing area parking lot.

Tony Czech Britton Ellingson Brit in a pinch, the Upper

Once Barker Reservoir starts to spill, Boulder Creek becomes attractive as flows of over 400 begin to pad out the chunky river bottom, creating a creeky roadside stretch of class IV.



Front Range • Boulder Creek

Alex Henes Dawn Powell-londono Lower Boulder Canyon

The Source

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	200	250	350	450
Character	boat abuse	still abusive	start yur' engines	speeding tickets
Class	V-	V-	V	V+
Quality	★	★★	★★★	★★★★
Gradient	400 fpm			
Remoteness	surrounded by hippies			
Hitchability	hikeable shuttle, ideal for a scout			
Length	1.1 miles			
Season	May, June			
Gauge	Middle Boulder Creek @ Nederland			
Put-in	At Hellums Falls, visible from the road			
Take-out	Hessie			

The Source.... It's not for everyone, but if you're interested in ultra-scenic Colorado micro-creeking, this may be the state's finest example. The gradient is around 400 fpm and does not have any drops over five vertical feet. The creek simply tears-ass down a mountainside. An optimal level for this creek is 350 cfs at the gauge in Nederland, and only 2/3 of that water is in the creek itself. Truly a knife fight in a phone booth.

A typical run starts by dropping boats at the put-in and scouting your way up from the take-out, hiking the shuttle in the process. It's impossible to remember all the moves, so focus on the highlights. A guide is not necessary, but can save a lot of carnage. He'll remember where to go long after you've forgotten. I consider the scout mandatory for first timers, or runs after any significant change in flow, because the creek is only a small tree wide. More than one boater who skipped the scout has found a log across his chest.

The base of Hellums Falls is the traditional put-in. Several demanding drops, including Gunshy and Harvey Wallbanger, can be found upstream for those inclined to clean the wood that inevitably builds up. I am willing to leave the upper drops wood choked because they filter the wood from the bulk of the rest of the run. If by visual inspection you find this upper section to be clean, the commonly used put-in is at an obvious meadow with fire-pits about a mile above Hellums. This upper run needs more water than the lower mile to be at an optimum level. Hellums waterfall has been run left, on numerous occasions, but the landing sure is shallow. Only mank specialists need apply.

Kickstart is the fun low angle slide directly below Hellums. Willow tunnels that should be negotiated in the right channel to avoid a low bridge, lead into a tight warm-up junk show. Two five-footers, the opener, Deforrestation and the shallow crux, Slot Machine, arrive quickly after you untangle yourself from the Willows. These drops represent the meat of the Bad F gorge. At least they have a good eddy between them. After Slot Machine people tend to get lost in the maze of mank that ensues. Sooner than you think, you'll round a right hand corner and without warning drop into Dead Hiker cascade. While relatively straightforward, Dead Hiker ends in a mean river-wide ledge hole that has vertical granite walls on either side. This hole becomes something to behold at high water and is the most frequent site of Source beat downs. A few more moves and maybe a shallow pin or two later you are confronted with the metal cheese-grater. Make your pre-planned move around this ugly hazard, duck the footbridge and get ready to break out the safety equipment. The preferred take-out is a 1/2- mile further through easy water down to the T in the road. This is easier on the environment than banging your truck up to the footbridge. You can also walk your boat from the footbridge out to the main parking area.

Hot Tip: If you're in the lead at Dead Hiker and you miss the boof, your friends will land on you.

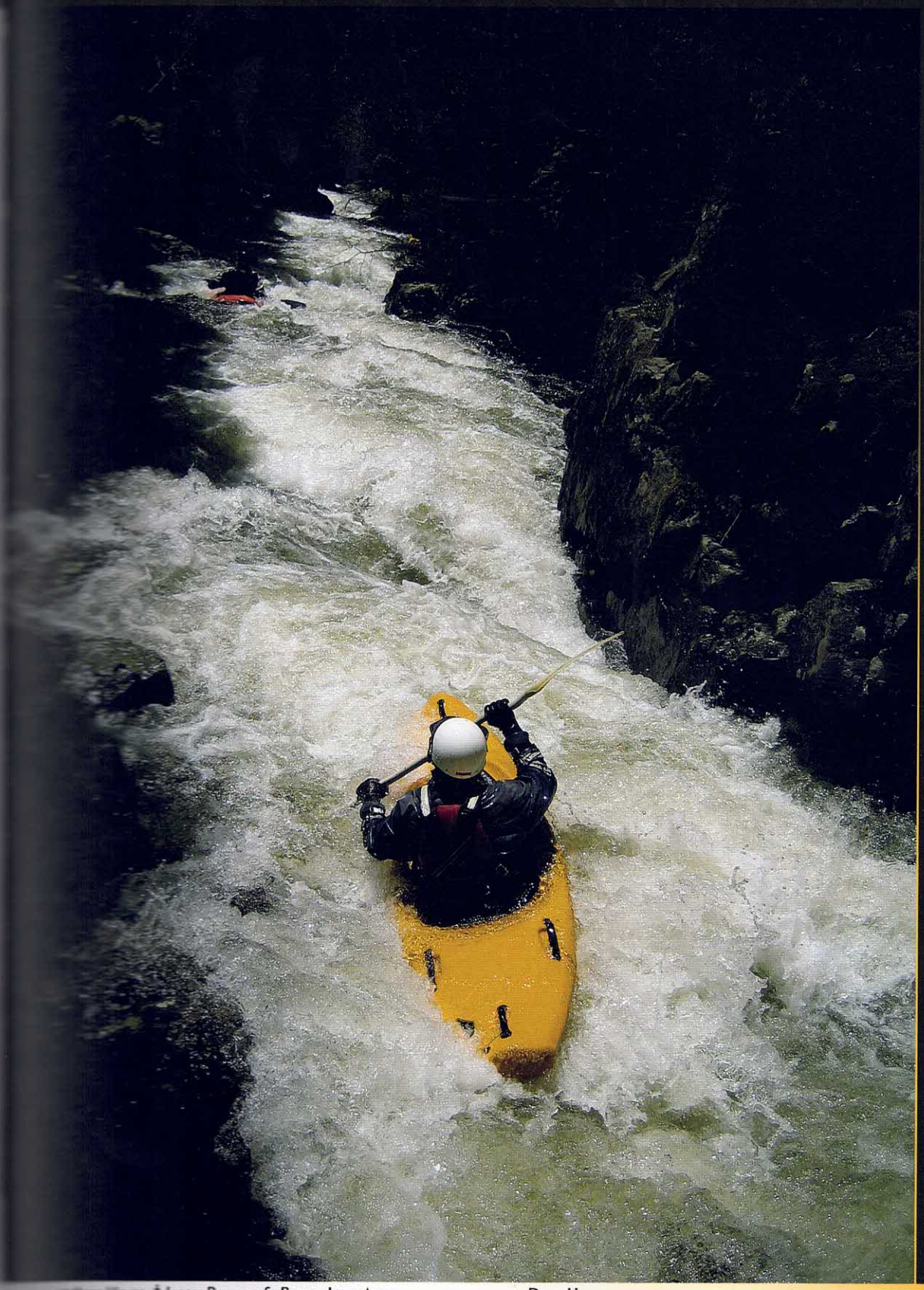
Gauge Info: The gauge is mysterious because it includes the flows for both Jasper Creek and the Source of Boulder Creek, so you're never really sure what's in the Source. Also note that the flow changes significantly from morning to evening during runoff. A difference of 50 cfs on the gauge translates into a completely different run.

-Joe Keck, The Mank Crew

Directions

To get to the take-out from Nederland take Rd 130 west and go right onto Rd 111. At the fork and start of Rd 111, left will take you to the trailhead parking at Hessie and the bridge crossing that is the normal take-out. Right will take you about a mile up to the put-in at Hellums Waterfall.

A screaming fast mank fest. Blind turns, wood, pin spots, small eddies, and fast current all compressed into one mile. Hippies welcome.



Jason Roberts & Bruno Lutz ♦blue angeling through Dead Hiker

Lower Jasper

Lower Jasper Creek was pioneered by Sean Lee, Charlie Beavers, and a group of southeastern creekers in 2001. If you know Sean, you already have an idea of what this creek is like, and if you don't then plan for a steep and fast creek that isn't easy to get out of between the drops. A pre-scout is easy and mandatory. Make sure you are on your game as KMF is one of the craziest drops I have ever seen. It has been run a couple of times, but not many.

The put-in is above two 8' boofs that precede a gnarly 15'er landing in a cauldron. There are a couple of drops above the put-in that have not been run yet due to wood (although that may have changed by the time you read this). The two 8'ers are clean right down the middle. After the second one, you need to get left to setup and then drive right off the 15' Are You Kidding Me Falls (KMF). Get a good boof. This is definitely the gnarliest drop of the lower. It lands in a 5' wide cauldron with a narrow run out, requiring paddlers to land upright and paddle hard. Set up a strong safety team here since the hole is very sticky. If you get sucked back into the hole, you'll know what I mean.

If you make it past KMF the next drop will come up fairly quickly. It is a six' boof that lands at the lip of Bridge Falls requiring a good boof. Bridge Falls is a short, steep, and bouncy slide. After the falls, there is a sweet triple drop that is pretty mellow. It requires a couple of quick moves, but nothing like the other stuff. Take out after the triple drop and walk through the woods back to the Hessie trail.

Visual CFS	130<lower only 200<upper only
Class	V+ to NR
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	700 fpm
Length	variable & short
Season	near peak or peak
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Hessie Trail

Directions: Start at the Source take-out and hike up the Hessie Trail, taking the first possible left turn. There are some old no-trespassing signs, but I think it is all forest service land. When you come to a creek crossing, you are at Bridge Falls. Hikers tend to put logs here to cross so some wood removal might be necessary. The meat is just upstream of you now. Hike up the side of the creek and scout.

Upper Jasper

The Upper is a very steep and cold alpine creek that was first run in 2003 by Sean Lee, Andy Blakesley, and myself. It's short, offers only a handful of drops, and is extremely dangerous and challenging. That means it's fun if you grease the lines.

The approach to Friday the 13th is a long, fast, bouncy slide. Start right and move far left at the entrance of the drop, due to an ugly sieve on the right. After the tight entrance the river turns to the right and drops about twenty'. Stay upright since it is very rocky underneath. The small pool at the bottom is deep and has been well tested. When you resurface below the drop, eddy out and catch your breath. The rest of the run is fast moving, class V boogie water. Keep your nose up and don't get pinned. Take out above a large unrunnable cascade.

Directions: Start at the Source take-out. Gear up, chug some Red Bull, and carry your boat up the Hessie Trail for about one mile. When you cross a bridge look upstream. You will see a sick 25' drop, dubbed Friday the 13th. Put-in above this drop where a couple of smaller drops above it offer a brief warm-up.

-Nick Wigston (both)

MATT BOOTH ♦ROADTRIPPIN' WITH A FULL ARSENAL

#ES ↑ Brad Higinbotham & KM ♦not letting Brad scout, Narrows, SSV

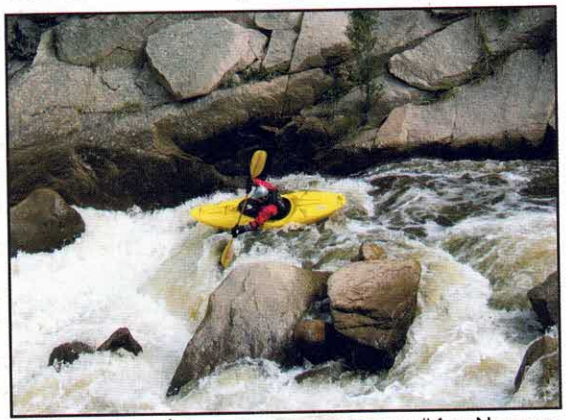
South Saint Vrain

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	170	220	300	350
Character	nerd	freshman	cheerleader	prom queen
Class	V (V+)	V (V+)	V+	NR
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	300 fpm crux			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good, unless it's dark and the guy that picked you up just left the bar			
Length	4.9 miles total (3.2 picnic area down, 3.6 Upper to Narrows)			
Season	May, June			
Gauge	Saint Vrain nr Lyons minus the North Saint Vrain			
Put-in	at confluence, or better at Picnic area near mm 25			
Take-out	near mm 29, where One-in-Five is visible from the road			

Although not the most difficult whitewater in the South Platte drainage, the South Saint Vrain is quite possibly the most technical. Squeezed in between Highway 7 and steep canyon walls, the rapids consist almost entirely of blast rock strewn in piles at a gradient that approaches 300 fpm in the crux section. SSV is the best afternoon workout creek run in the state, since the few hundred boofs, dufeks, and occasional forward strokes can be physically exhausting by the time you reach the take-out. Regardless, a few tricky rapids and the crux mile will surely get your adrenaline pumping much more than the gym.

There are roughly seven distinct class V cascades between the confluence and the Narrows section, all of which can dish up pins, pitons, and worlds of hurt if you were to find yourself upside down. All but a few drops are easily read-and-run for solid paddlers, since the main flow is normally where the clean line is.

The Narrows is a well defined section one mile up from the bottom, and the lead in drops to the top of the crux can be rather quick, making it a good idea to pre-scout the entrance for the last portage/scout eddy. Boaters looking for action will find a crux section consisting of four drops stacked on top of each other with little to no room to eddy out or re-set in the event of a missed line. It runs cleaner than it looks, going something like left, left or right, center, center, right, center or right, and dropping close to 60' in that sequence. Beware of bloody knuckles and broken paddles. A clean line down this will have you smiling for a week.



Marcia Ready ⛹ Adam Barron 🔥 at home in #4 of Narrows

Around a left hand bend in the river you will find the exit drop of the crux, Schoolgirl, which requires a left boof that lands on top of a rock. Take your chances with the small hole at the base rather than the sieve at the top. The right side boof has seen intense carnage. Expect a fast, high pin potential run-out with very bony drops at even normal flows for the next mile.

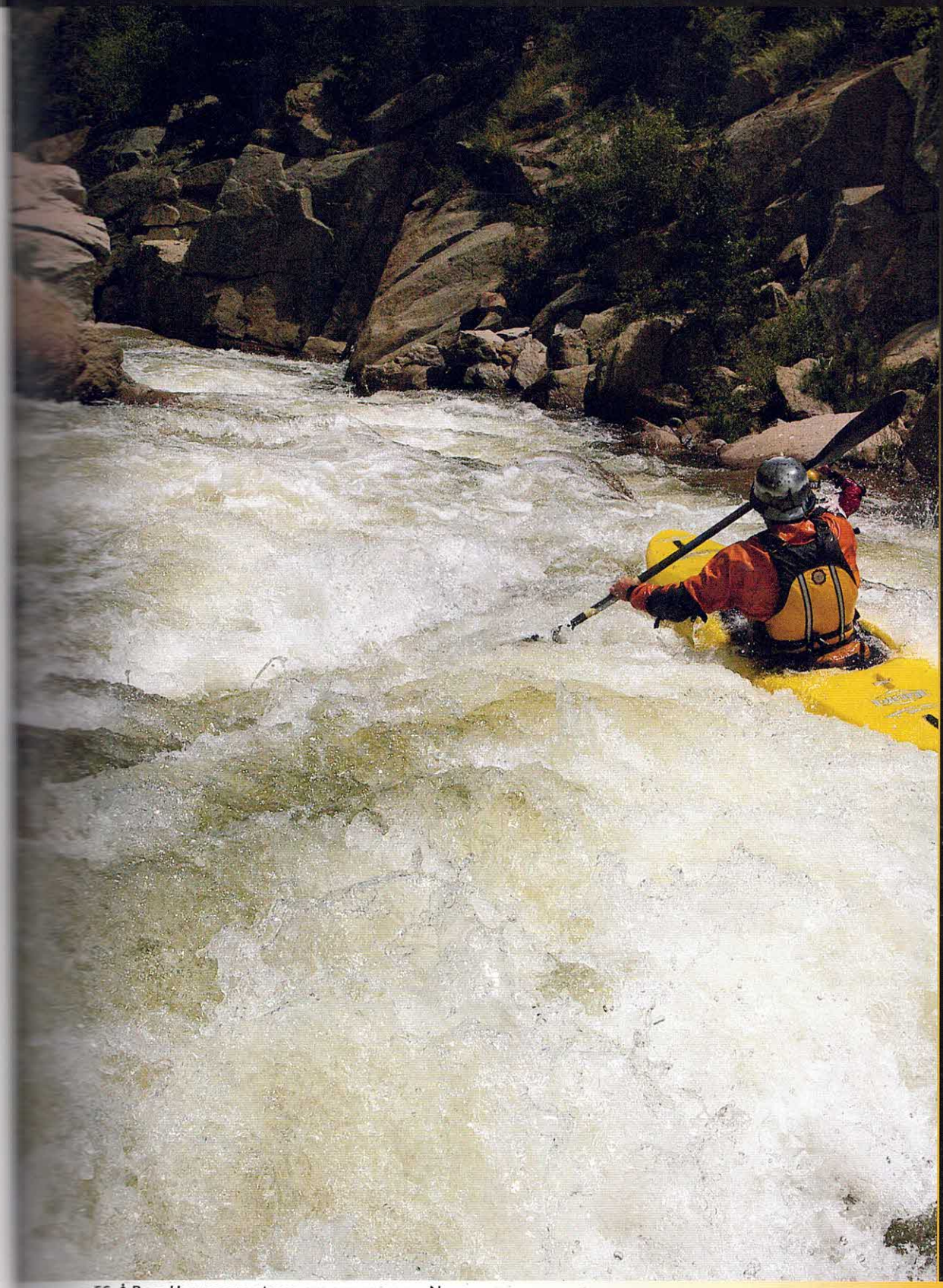
The take-out drop is called One-in-Five for the swim odds, although I think the odds are actually much better than that. A blind right to left lead in will route you off this six-footer straight and clear of danger. The swim factor doesn't come from a thrashy hole, but from smooth bedrock walls that are about 8'6" wide at the base of the falls, making it nearly impossible to dig a creek boat out once it is sideways.

This was Adam Barron's favorite run. Give him a high five in the Narrows section.

Directions

From Lyons drive 3.9 miles west on Highway 7, and pull over where the walls constrict, and the visible bottom drop (near mm 29). The bottom of the Narrows is .9 miles upstream, and the top is .4 miles above this. Put in at a developed picnic area, 3.2 miles from the bottom. The top put-in is near mm 24. If you don't plan to run the Narrows or One-in-Five, then take-out at the top of the narrows, near mm 27.

A HIGHLY TECHNICAL, EASILY ACCESSIBLE AFTERWORK RUN, ALTHOUGH WORTHY OF SPENDING A FULL DAY WITH. THE NSV'S LITTLE SISTER, AND SHE IS SO HOT.



ES BRAD HIGINBOTHAM READ AND RUN ABOVE THE NARROWS

Lyons Local

Lyons is a sleepy little town a half-hour north of Boulder containing a very high concentration of quality whitewater. With multiple class V options in the upper reaches, excellent manmade freestyle features in town, and a few beginner options, the town is constantly seeing a good flow of paddlers coming through these days—and the locals are welcoming the crowd. A few bars, a grocery store with good to-go sandwiches, and a little coffee shop (that serves as a meeting point) seem to be the center-pieces of the area. It bears some resemblance to Morrison without all the touristy crap. Whether here for a few days, or an afternoon it's sure to be a refreshing experience. Huge props to Arn for his volunteer efforts throughout the process of getting a park built.

Lyons Town Run & Park

Although some of the design work came earlier for this in-town stretch, the park has really only developed a personality recently. In 2003 the Black Bear was given a face lift, and was good enough that at high water paddlers could throw huge, nearly effortless air loops. In 2005 more changes came, with the immediately downstream construction of the A-Hole—a sweet pocket for hole moves that can be a better feature. Watch out for the slightly ugly river left shore line. It isn't bad for paddling through, but can get exciting if suddenly floating upside-down towards the rock after a botched freestyle maneuver.

The newest addition to the freestyle options is the October Hole, designed to ideally run through October. Although it appears to be a little shy of being good for that long, it is the best of the features at low water. Loops are good as low as 300 cfs, and at lower flow it is still okay for low angle moves and blasts. The feature is a 1/2--mile downstream of the other two, where the river splits briefly. The left channel is a fun boof over a dam at certain levels, but higher or lower flows create a bigger hole or shallow landing, making the right channel the better option.

The original whitewater park, and the best training ground for stark beginners is found a ½ mile upstream of the park and play features. This is a good thing, since it allows beginners to get a longer run despite having fewer drops than some of the other area parks. It's a more beginner-friendly park than Boulder Creek.

Directions: Take Hwy 36 west into the edge of Lyons, parking at the dirt turn-out just before the Lyons Welcome Sign (sandstone rock). This is the October Hole parking. A ½-mile upstream, at the large wooden bear statue, are the Black Bear and A-Hole features. The original park can be found by taking Hwy 36 to the T-intersection, turning left onto Hwy 7, then turning right into Meadow Park on Park Dr (river left of creek).

CFS	80<October Hole min 250<A-Hole & BB in 500<huge air
Class	II+ low to III+ high
Quality	★★★★★ (freestyle)
Gradient	45 fpm
Length	park & play or short
Season	March to Oct potential
Gauge	NSV@Lyons-SSV
Put-in	Meadow Park
Take-out	October Hole

NSV Apple Valley

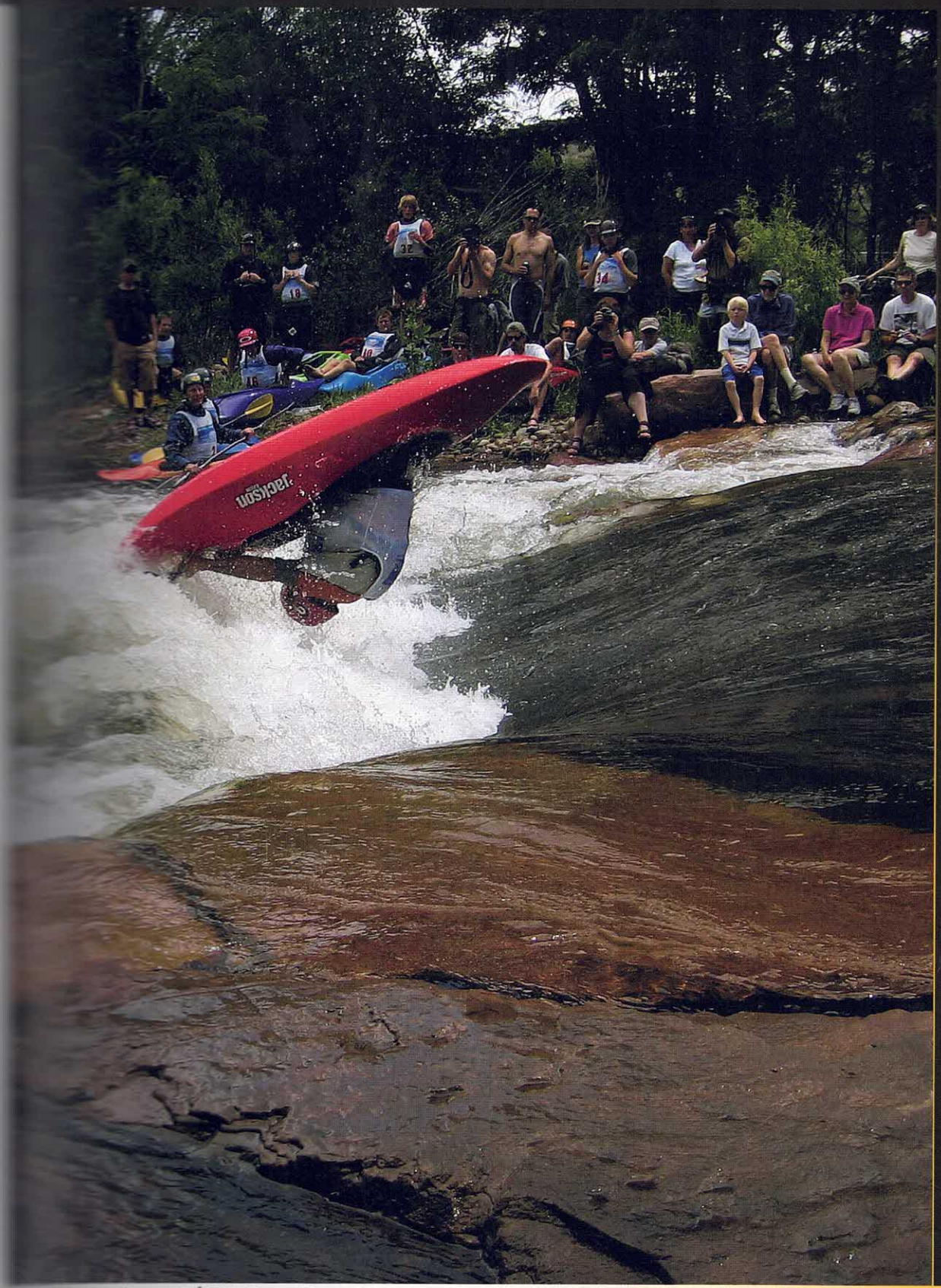
Ah, the beginner run of the area. The Apple Valley stretch is short, roadside to Hwy 36, and remains continuous class II at regular flows without any real flatwater. An occasional tree can end up in the path of progress, but usually everything is pretty easy to get around. Be heads up for the rock-pile built diversion dam early in the run, which has a good line on the right (scout if nervous). It's a mere 4.2 miles in total for this stretch, but it is easy to combine with Shelly's Cottages and/or the whitewater park downstream. Hitch a shuttle from Lyons and you can paddle all the way to town, and straight into Oscar Blues—the official boater bar of Lyons.

Directions: Take out either at the top or the bottom of the Lyons Town section. Put-in approximately three miles upstream of Lyons, at the wooden Apple Valley bridge, off of 71 Rd.

CFS	160<min<250<good
Class	II+ low to III- high
Quality	★★
Gradient	50 fpm
Length	4.2 miles
Season	June, July (dam)
Gauge	NSV@Lyons-SSV
Put-in	Apple Valley bridge
Take-out	Lyons Park

📷 Darren Livingston 🚶 Matt & Jen Booth ♦ the local couple of the kayak scene

With the class V siblings of the upper reaches, aerial freestyle features in town, and a few beginner options, Lyons is constantly seeing a good flow of paddlers ready to get rated R on the action.



Eric Gatewood Matt Booth Georgia Pride is rampant at the Lyons Park, A-Hole

NSV Shellys Cottages

Usually one grade more difficult than Apple Valley, the Shelly's Cottages stretch is still roadside to Hwy 36 in the lower half, but ducks away from the highway and parallels the gravel 80 Rd—remaining roadside in a slightly quieter stretch. Putting-in before the road leaves the river, but after it crosses to the river left side will keep things mellow, and the entire stretch can be scouted on the shuttle. As always with such a small streambed paddlers need to stay heads up for wood. The rocks are generally smooth and rounded, which keeps things gentle when the water is low, and ups the speed of the river at higher flow. Avoid flood stage due to low bridges.

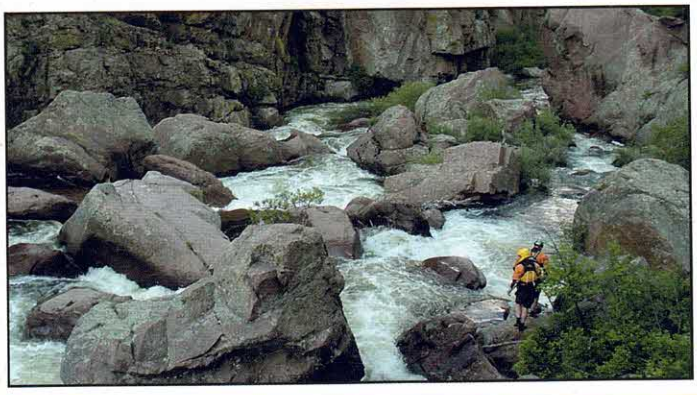
Directions: Take out at the Apple Valley bridge (71 Rd). A halfway access point is at the intersection of Hwy 36 and 80 Rd, or continue further up 80 Rd until just before it starts to climb a hill, leaving the river.

CFS	160<min 250<optimal<400
Class	III low to III+ high
Quality	★★★
Gradient	90 fpm
Length	2.5 miles
Season	June, July (dam)
Gauge	NSV@Lyons-SSV
Put-in	80 Rd bridge
Take-out	Apple Valley bridge

NSV Proving Grounds

It's not the hardcore NC17 upstream, nor the Disney animation going on towards Lyons. No, the proving grounds are straight up PG as the best V- boofing to be had in the Saint Vrain drainage. It's one of the few creeks in Colorado that have a committed feeling in a difficult environment, but the whitewater stays at the good V- or IV+ grade, level dependent.

A class II warm up leads into the canyon, and the first major rapid, Let's Make A Deal. Scout this 1/4-mile of action on river right. A sneak line is found on the far right but the center lines offer the most action. Avoid the left side of this stretch. A beautiful 5' boof into the pool halfway down leads to a decision of door one or two. Both lines go,



Darren Livingston ♦ Proving Grounds

Scout the next drop, Jeopardy, on river-left. Below this the canyon walls spread, and meandering IV- eventually rejoins the road and the take-out vehicle.

Directions: Take out at the 80 Rd bridge off of Hwy 36 west of Lyons. The put-in is at the gate at the end of 80 Rd. Be extra courteous towards the rangers. Relations have improved drastically on NSV, the run just upstream.

CFS	180<min 350<optimal<500<big
Class	V-
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	110 fpm
Length	2 miles
Season	May, June, near peak
Gauge	NSV@Lyons-SSV
Put-in	80 Rd bridge
Take-out	80 Rd gate

Left Hand Creek

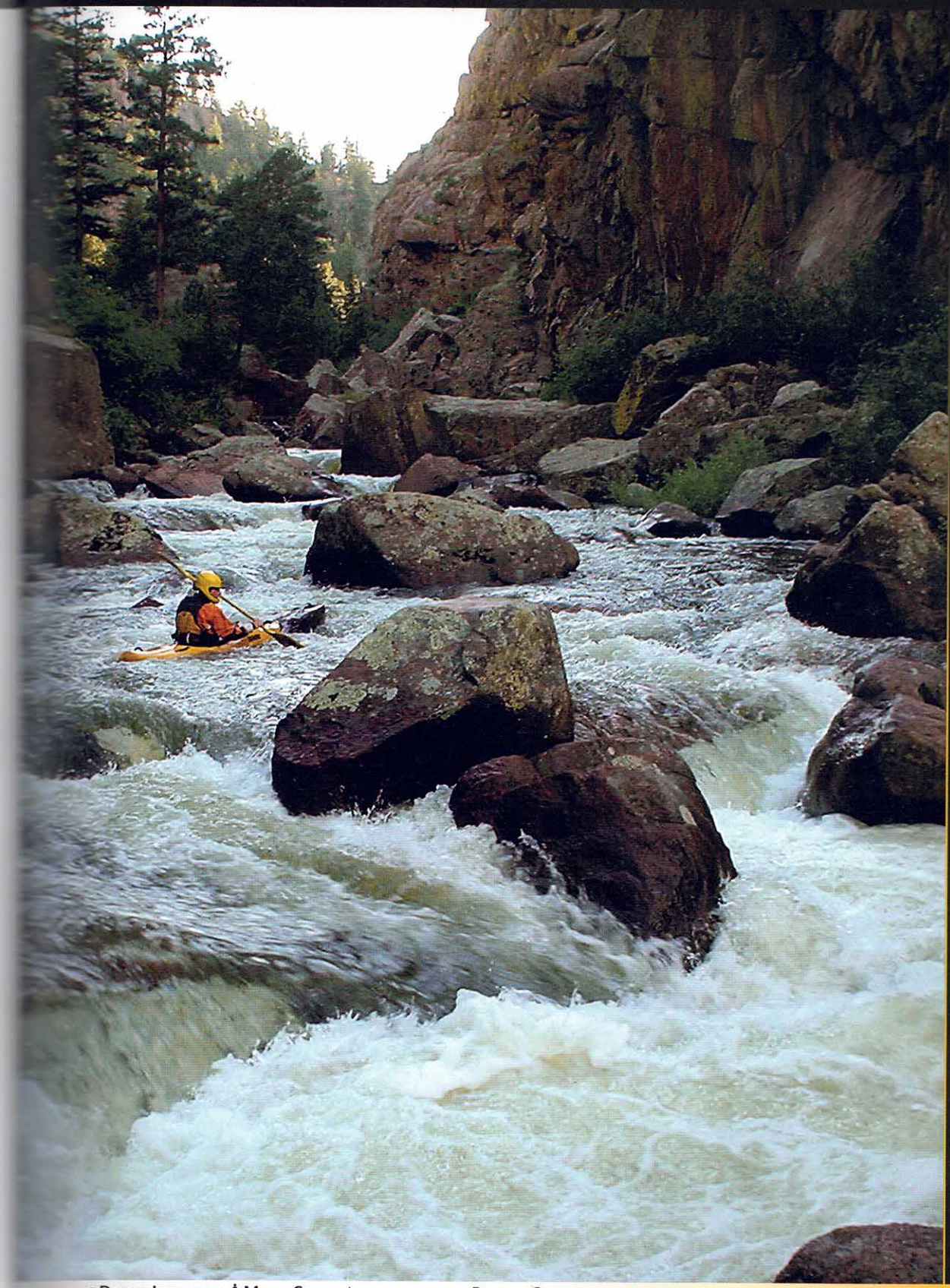
It feels like singletrack-in-a-kayak on the Front Range. It's manky, narrow, and roadside along Left Hand Canyon Drive. Left Hand only flows at the peak of the season, with added rain or low elevation spring snowfall to really get things covered. Plan on paddling this not-so-scenic stretch in the rain.

The poor visibility of a rainy descent can wreak havoc on paddlers, since minor pins are common in the manky drops. If the water level cooperates this is a sweet little mank fest of IV+ or V-. The adventure value is sure to cure some rainy-day blues, but don't drive too far out of the way for this one. Pre-scout the entire run for new wood.

Directions: The entire run is roadside to 94 Rd, found off of Hwy 36 between Boulder and Lyons. A park towards the bottom of the canyon is a good take-out. Put-in about 3 miles up the canyon.

CFS	125<min
Class	IV+ to V-
Quality	★★
Gradient	160 fpm
Length	3 miles
Season	peak plus extra water
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Left Hand Cyn Drive

It's not the hardcore NC17 upstream, nor the Disney animation going on towards Lyons. No, the proving grounds are straight up PG as the best V- boofing to be had in the Saint Vrain drainage.



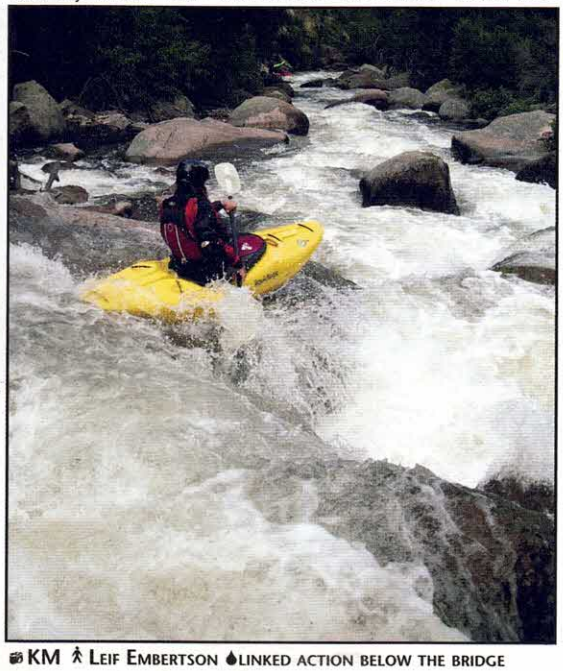
Darren Livingston Marty Cronin the second drop, Proving Grounds

North Saint Vrain

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	150	250	325	500
Character	long day of bounce	first timers special	20% failure rate @PI	failure rate upped
Class	V+ (Ps)	V+ (Ps)	V+ (NR, Ps)	V+ (NRs, Ps)
Quality	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	370 fpm first mile, 225 fpm Cali Section, 170 fpm in between			
Remoteness	high, but trailside at times			
Hitchability	very poor (the victims of Cascade One & Two can run shuttle)			
Length	9.5 miles (a long 9.5)			
Season	June, July			
Gauge	NSV near Allenspark			
Put-in	Hwy 7 bridge			
Take-out	Buttonrock Preserve at end of CR 80			

Strap your helmet down tight, check out your group and try to find the victim... if you don't see him in your group, IT'S YOU! We meet at the Boulder Java shop to get the tweakers ready for the day—it's long, violent and mentally straining, and that's for the seasoned class V paddler. God forbid you're a wannabe.

About 90% of my trips down the North Saint Vrain include great paddlers getting destroyed within the first three-miles of this 11-mile blitzkrieg of rocks and water. Dress warm, as most trips include snow and without a doubt, rain. This run is log-choked, with V+ intensity from your first five paddle strokes until the three-mile class IV rest (which comes about four-miles into the run). You'll want a guide on this one; I've run this section many times and my fastest time was around five hours—most take eight to nine. Runs sans carnage are rare. NSV has been paddled up to 550 cfs, with all of the drops being run (Gordon Banks taking the daddy drop, Cascade One). I recommend 250 cfs for your first time.



KM Leif Embertson linked action below the bridge

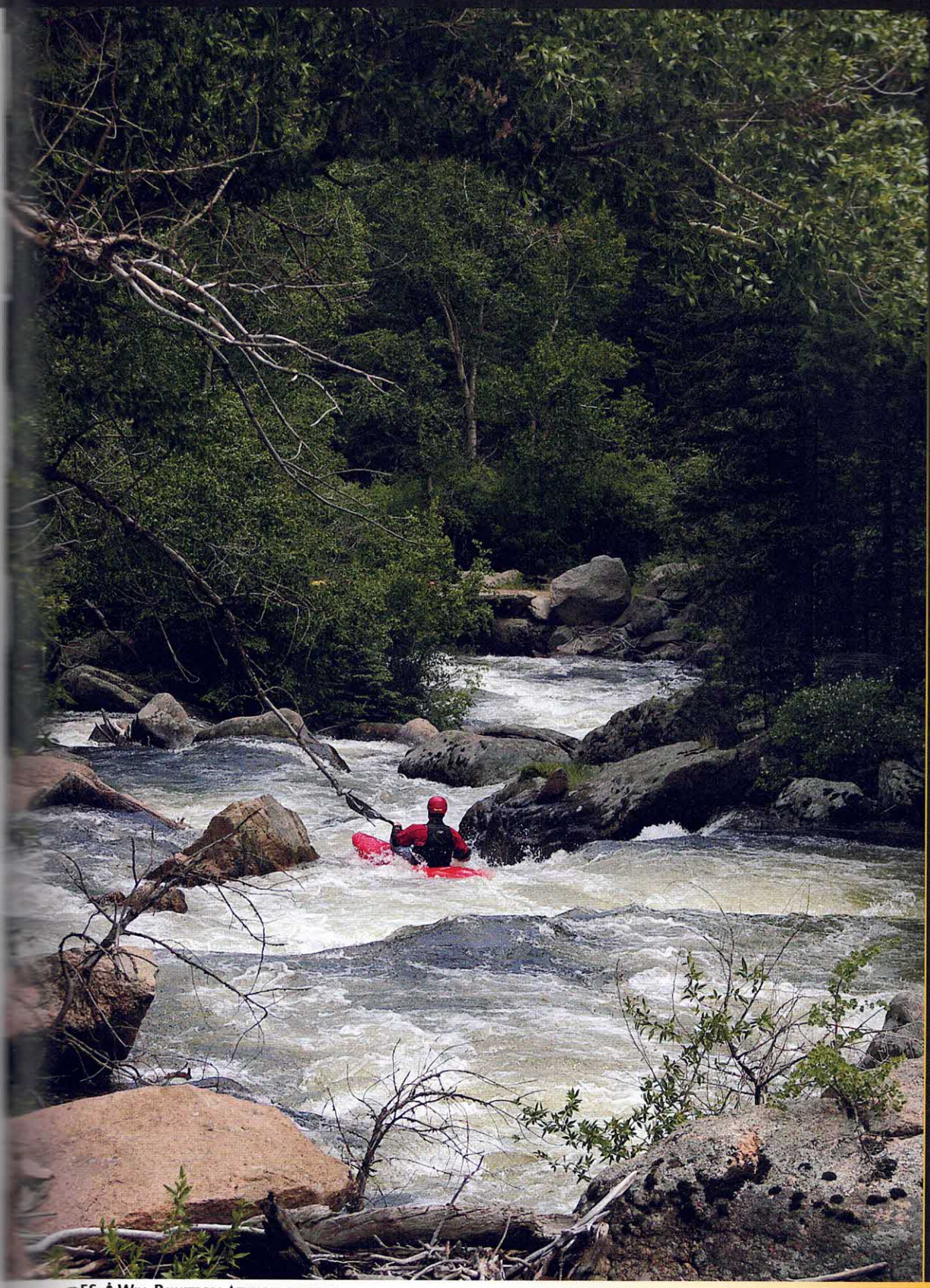
The first four-miles of this stretch are steep, huge boulder garden rapids, where a half-cocked boat is a pin. Cascade One will hit you immediately and make you want to go home and ask for a cup of warm milk—most walk this drop before even putting-in. If you don't like the looks of the run-out to Cascade One, think survival and run shuttle—it gets harder.

Cascade Two comes at you two-miles in and sucks you in before you know it. Look at this drop and do not miss the eddy (it holds two boats so be on the sharp end). After C2 you will drop through many grottos and twisting drops. You will encounter wood, undercut rocks and multiple routes with only one real way to go. Its character is a lot like its little sister, SSV—it's awesome!

After the class IV section rest stop, lunch and a "here we go" from your friends, you hit the section you came for—the Cali Section. This is arguably the best class V+ stretch in Colorado and is non-stop for three miles. This section contains huge holes and great moves over big drops, with must make eddies in between. One drop is usually walked right below the first walking bridge. It has been run several times, usually ending with the person swimming under a rock, whilst their friends try to get to them. When you see it you will understand.

After the portage it's game on again, with more drops linking together until you reach a second bridge. Here you will need to scout Thread the Needle. This drop is big and technical with bad consequences for the off-line paddler. Depending on the flow it either must be run, or may be walked with great difficulty. After the needle it mellows to IV/IV+ with wood and some blind drops. The

IT'S LONG, VIOLENT AND MENTALLY STRAINING, AND THAT'S FOR THE SEASONED CLASS V PADDLER. GOD FORBID YOU'RE A WANNABE.



ES Will Rawstrom typical scenery

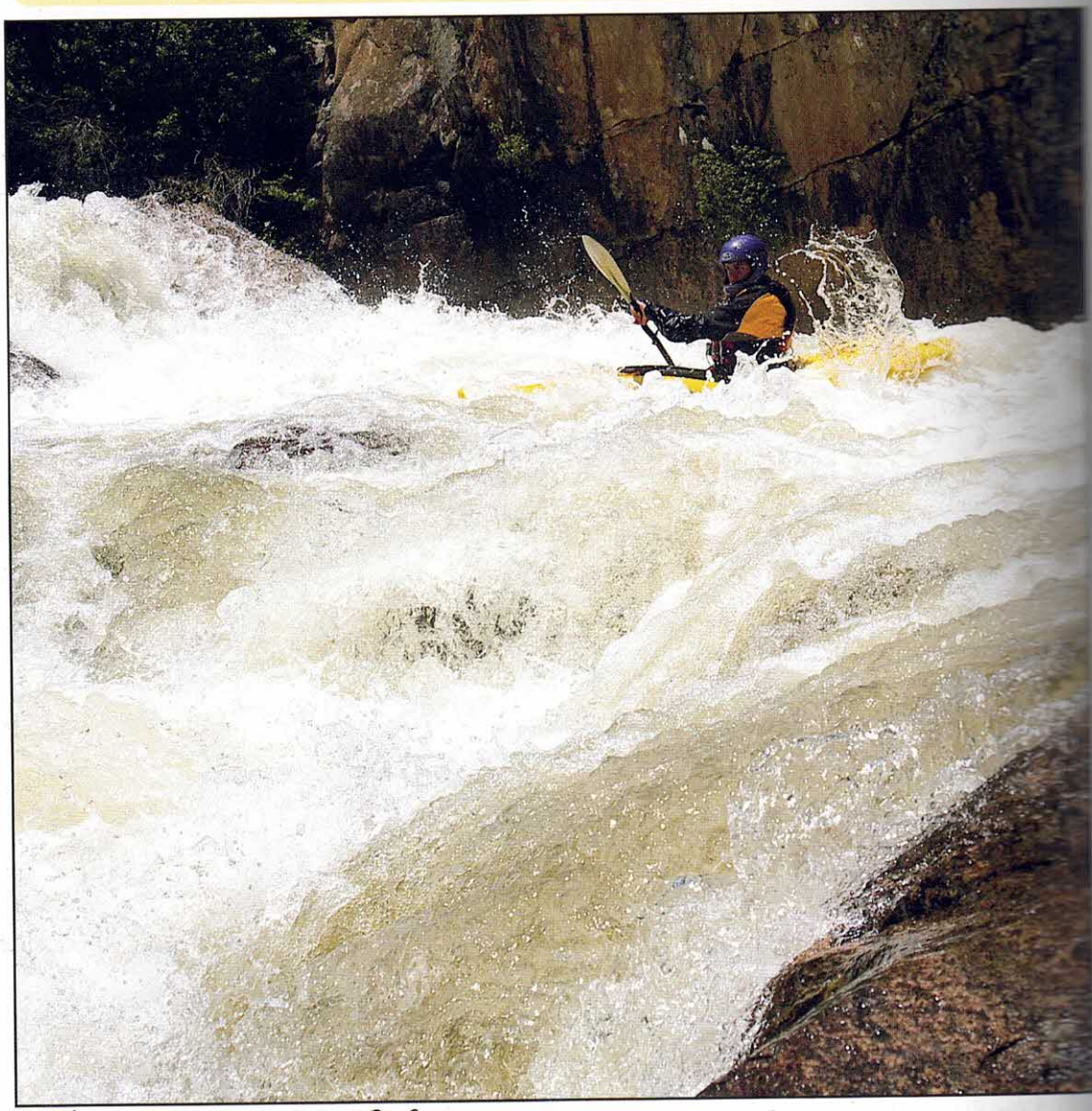
last big drop has to be scouted and comes on you at the end—don't go right.

The dams on this stretch are run on the left, except for the 30'er in the last 1/2- mile (portage). Be respectful of everyone you encounter, and be stealth and fast on the reservoir as your fellow boaters have worked hard to secure legal paddling across Button Rock. As of now you can give your real name as they've realized Gordon Banks can't possibly range in height from 5'8" to 6'3". BE RESPECTFUL of all rangers and fisherman as the times have changed for the better on this run.

-Gary Edgeworth

Directions

Meet at the coffee shop in Lyons and pick up the California Sandwich for the California Section from the grocery store next door. Take Hwy 36 west following the NSV and turn left onto the dirt 80 Rd. Follow 80 Rd until it dead ends at a parking area on river left. Park, this is the take-out. Fortunately there is no need to be stealth, but when the Button Rock paddle was illegal this parking was enemy territory. Any racks, stickers or other dead paddler give-aways on your shuttle rig and you could expect to be apprehended at the reservoir with your real name including license plate number in hand. Hopefully those days are long gone by the time you're reading this. Feel lucky. Head back to Lyons and take Hwy 7 west up the South Saint Vrain drainage. Park on the river right side of the NSV bridge north of Allenspark. Discreetly scout cascade one and decide where to put-on.



ES Tyson Titensor the crux of the Cali Section

Bobby Miller ♦Cali Section granite

Big Thompson

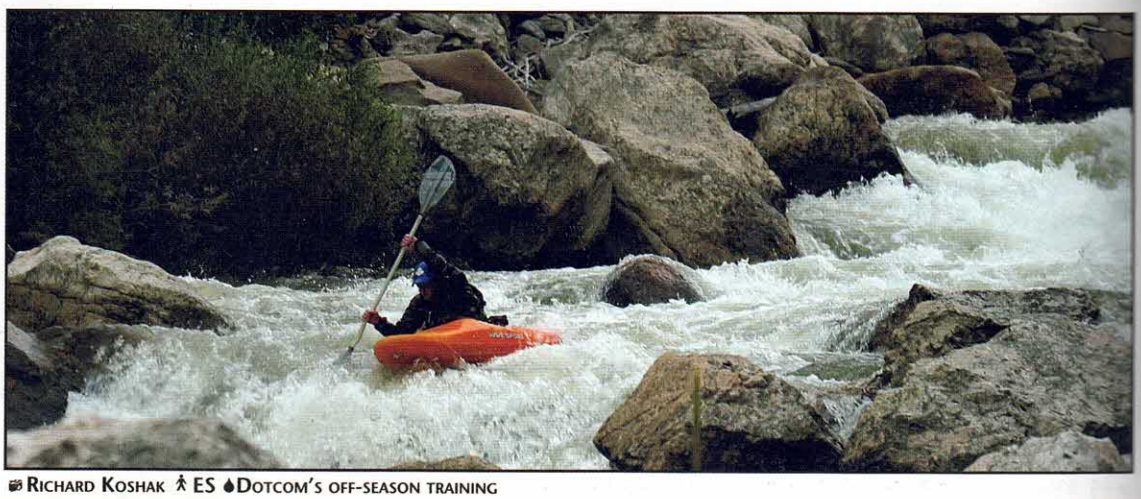
Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	200	300	400	500
Character	rocky	cushioned	whoa	very whoa
Class	V-	V	V+	V+
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	330 fpm Sluff Section, 160 fpm other action			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	walkable shuttle, or good			
Length	1 mile or variable			
Season	unpredictable dam release (March?, August?, November?)			
Gauge	Big Thompson River below Lake Estes			
Put-in	top of gnar near Drake			
Take-out	bottom of gnar			

The Colorado - Big Thompson Project, built from 1938-1956, brings the essential raw ingredient necessary to make Weld and Larimer counties the rich, agriculturally-productive farming areas that they are today—an accessible supply of late-season irrigation water imported from the Colorado River headwaters. The water resurfaces in the headwaters of the Big Thompson drainage for a new life as eastern-slope water. This water is stored in Estes Lake (reservoir) and released into the canyon at, let us say, hard to predict times. In a big year, the Thompson will run for a time during peak run-off, but many years the only time you can get a run in will be during a late season release. This run is good enough that I consistently check the gauge into November.

Though there are many fine stretches of whitewater throughout Big Thompson Canyon, the most classic and memorable rapids are located between the Handicap Fishing Pier and the tiny burg of Drake. Beginning about three miles west of Drake the river drops through a mile long torrent of sustained and intimidating roadside gnar that will get even the most hardened creek boaters blood pumping. A scout of the entire section is nearly mandatory for first timers. Three decidedly tougher and/or scarier drops come evenly spaced at the beginning, middle and end of this steepness—all of which is sometimes referred to as the Sluff Section.

The first waterfall, Garbage Disposal, rages over a distinct lip, lands you in a powerful and shallow seam and then attempts to grind you up as you are spit out hopefully upright and online through a gritty run-out. One unlucky paddler who capsized in the run-out recovered to find not only his knuckles bloodied, but also a shredded paddle which looked as though he had "stuck his blade in the garbage disposal."

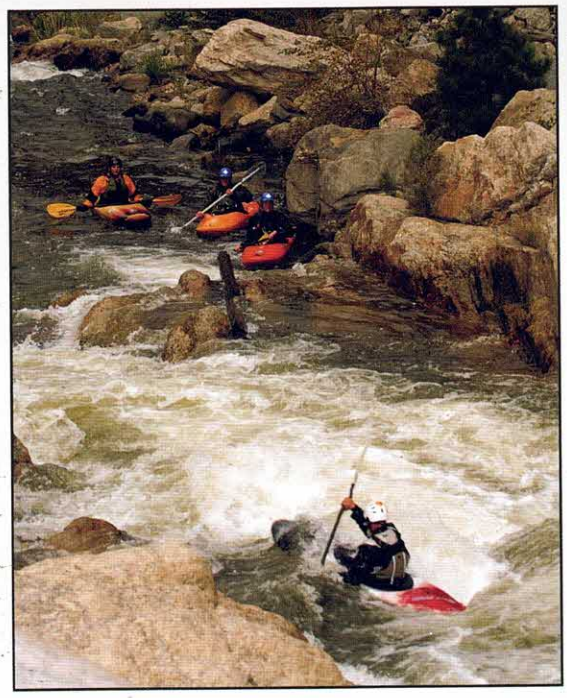
There is a bounty of continuous slots, boofs and slides once you are past the Garbage Disposal, but you had better know where you are going. Be careful when you put-on, as this steepest section is fairly flow sensitive and becomes slightly deeper, but much pushier when rare flows get above 400 cfs. When flows do get this high, the two miles



RICHARD KOSHAK ES DOTCOM'S OFF-SEASON TRAINING

GOOD ENOUGH TO CONSISTENTLY CHECK THE GAUGE INTO NOVEMBER FOR THE OFF-SEASON CLASS V SNEAK, AND WHEN IT HAPPENS, GOOD ENOUGH TO RUN DESPITE THE TEMPS OR THE LEVEL.

RICHARD KOSHAK 🚶 MIKE HOLMES 💧 TAKING ON BIG DADDY NUMBER TWO



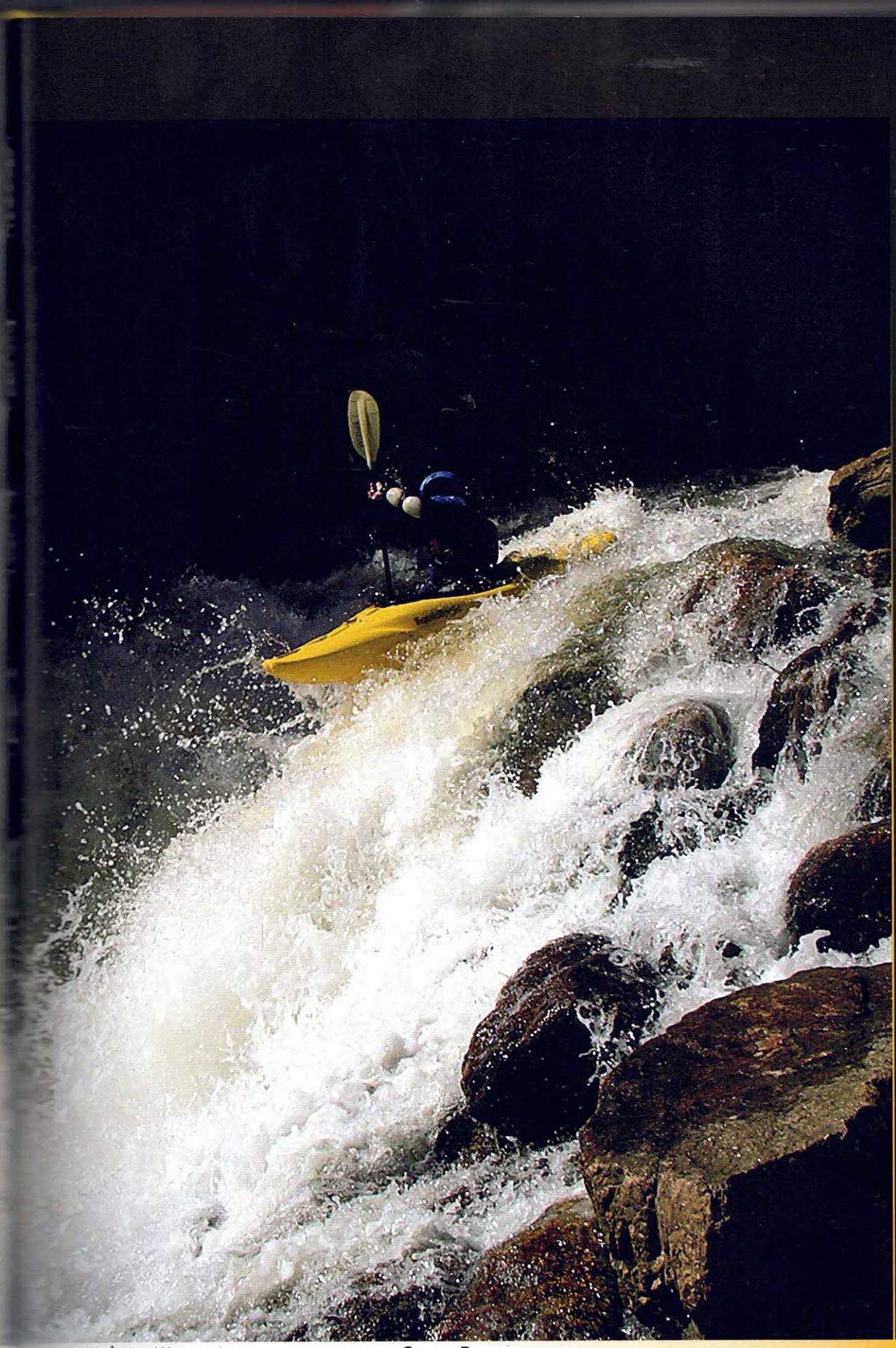
below the Sluff Section turn into a wild but manageable roller coaster. For the brave, this is a nice cool-down and extension of the run upstream, but it also makes a great IV+ off-season creek run on its own. The non-hair boater can start it off with a bang by running the last rapid of the Sluff Section, Canon Shot, named for the late Hunter S. Thompson. Continue on down the canyon as far as you like below Drake.

A couple of fun class IV drops and holes to punch are found shortly after passing Drake and the confluence with the North Fork, before the creek pools up and a quick portage is necessary around Idylwilde Dam. The best action below Drake follows, but be extremely heads up for a culvert-bridge with only micro-eddies at the Viestenz Smith Mountain Park that allow for a portage. Next is Cedar Cove, a float through a canyon neighborhood, followed by a walled in section of class III to the take-out. The weird thing here is that the canyon side wall is granite but the highway side wall is concrete, making it artificially committing. Although roadside, exit from the river here is very difficult. The final take-out is at the gauging station stairs under the big green diversion pipe.

Directions

Take Hwy 34, approximately eight miles east of Estes Park to the Handicap Fishing Pier. Set your shuttle either a mile downstream at the visible end of the very steep Sluff Section, two miles further at Drake, or anywhere between Drake and the gauging station for the lower run.

RICHARD KOSHAK PETE & COMPANY AFTERNOON, LATE-SEASON GNAR



ES Nick Wigston boofing the far left line of Garbage Disposal

Estes Park Area

Estes Park would seemingly be a prime location for a great front-range creeking destination, as the magnificent Rocky Mountain National Park plays host to the headwaters of both the North Saint Vrain and Big Thompson drainages. The high alpine scenery is stunning, forests lush, and peaks rugged in RMNP, but the whitewater falls short of expectations. The typical culprits are poor access (nearly everything requires some hiking), low flows in the numerous tributaries, manky rock, and an overabundance of wood and unrunnable cascades. Basically take the worst parts of kayaking in Colorado, and combine them—that's the character of RMNP creeking.

Forest Canyon is the most hope shattering, with an illegal sprint across protected tundra vegetation, just past a sign that reads, "Do stay on the trail. Damaged tundra plants take decades to recover." If you make it past the ethical conundrum at the Forest Canyon Overlook, a 2500' hiking descent into the U-shaped, glacier-carved valley leads to the river. There are some really quality rapids from here to Fern Lake Trail, but the 100-plus deadfall portages—and a long river level portage around a cascade make it not so worth it. Todd Gillman, Charlie Beavers, and Chris McHenry finished the Big Thompson stretch in the dark—hiking the last mile while able to see and hear the nearby Independence Day fireworks. Without a set shuttle they ended up hitching a ride with a park ranger who informed them they may be some of the few people to ever traverse the entire canyon, which lacks a trail.

Other descents and scouts have occurred on Glacier Creek, Mill Creek, and East Inlet, all of which require hike-and-huck paddling over low volume and sketchy drops. Expect portages on everything. A scout of the Upper NSV revealed some good potential buried under a lot of wood. A short stretch looks to be class V hike-and-huckable via the Thunder Lake Trail, and would probably be excellent if it were cleaned. Thus lies the problem—even in the name of whitewater woodcutting is strictly prohibited in RMNP.

Estes Park WWP

Name a town in Colorado that doesn't have a whitewater park. Okay, so it isn't quite like that—or maybe it is, but some of them, Estes Park included, get overlooked due to the lack of quality relative to the signature parks. I honestly can't even figure out what creek this is actually on, but I think it's the Big Thompson before it feeds into Lake Estes. Regardless, the two features, that are scary-shallow and tourist infested, are easy to find—located on the Hwy 34/36 business loop next to the Dairy Queen. When the flows are peaking the main feature is loop friendly, but its usually more of a spin spot or low angle cartwheel feature. Parking is limited at the small picnic area, but not from an overly crowded feature. It's an okay place for the locals to throw down on there lunch break when its running (similar peak season to NSV), but don't bother driving out of the way for this one.

Directions: Find Estes Park on a map, drive there. Park near Dairy Queen.

CFS	100<min<250<best
Class	III
Eddy	yes
Quality	★★
Season	peak
Gauge	Big T above Lake Estes
Riv Access	Dairy Queen

Little Tommy

The Little Tommy is the cute little name for the Little Thompson river that parallels Hwy 36 to the south of Estes Park. It's also such a cute little riverbed that I don't think its been run since CRC2 came out in '99 due to lack of flow. Thus, this description is included only because the run was grand fathered in, just as an 1885 house in Denver has the uncovered, open-wire spools still in place as the main electrical. It's historically included, legal, but not necessarily recommended or even understood—and that my friends, is the sorriest excuse for an analogy for any river description in this book. Deal with it. Scout well for new wood and expect portages, as well as a few low bridges when this is running. The gradient should hint at the quality when it is running.

Directions: Take out near FR 123, about 2.5 miles south of Estes Park. Put-in near Pinewood Springs along Hwy 36, a short ways north on 36 from the lower NSV sections.

CFS	125<min<200<sweet
Class	IV+ (P)
Quality	★
Gradient	165 avg
Length	6 miles
Season	peak plus
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Pinewood Springs
Take-out	FR 123

Brook Aitken Mike Paris Estes Whitewater Park

THE HIGH ALPINE SCENERY IS STUNNING, FORESTS LUSH, AND PEAKS RUGGED IN RMNP, BUT THE WHITEWATER FALLS SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS.

BROOK AITKEN 🚶 MIKE PARIS 💧DQ HOLE AT THE ESTES WHITEWATER PARK

No Soliciting

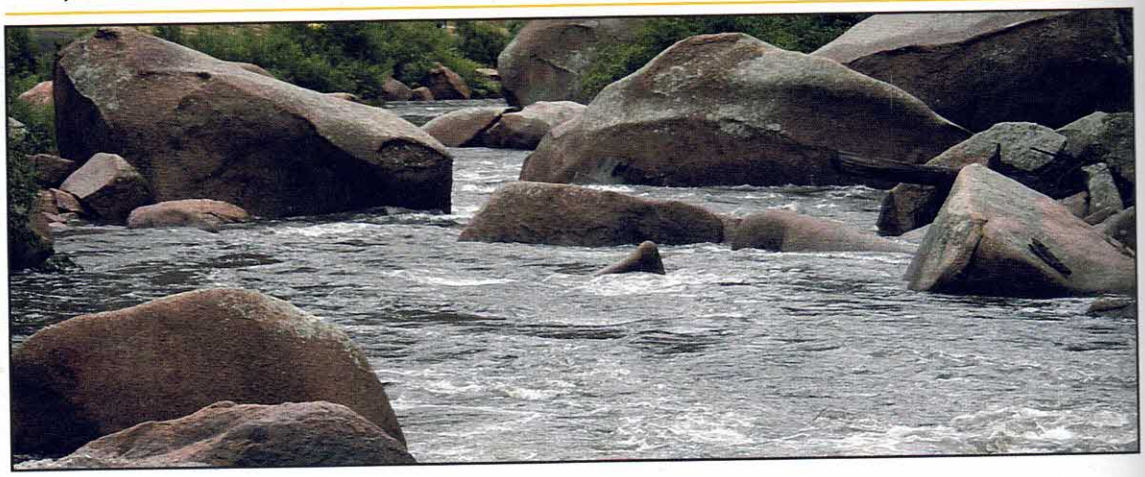
Adam Welch/adamwelch.net ♦Lincoln Ave, downtown Denver

Deckers (Cheesman Down)

This is a popular first season paddlers run on the lowest section of the South Fork South Platte. Paralleling South Platte River Road (97 Rd) allows for multiple put-in and take-out options, as well as easy scouting for nervous beginners. One rapid of note here, Chutes Rapid, is the most likely to trip up paddlers. Keeping the boat straight and paddling hard will get most through here fine, with a feeble brace to aide an enjoyable experience. Feel free to break up this eleven-mile section any way you want, and once feeling confident here, move up to the Foxton stretch below the boulder gardens.

Directions: The common take-out is at the Waterton put-in. The Chutes Rapid is about three miles upstream of the confluence, conveniently roadside to 97 Rd.

CFS	200<min<400<best
Class	II+
Quality	★★
Gradient	20 fpm
Length	3 miles (variable)
Season	April to September
Gauge	SP blw Cheesman Res
Put-in	S Platte Road (97 Rd)
Take-out	confluence w/NF



Foxton

Benefiting from the same regular plumbing that Bailey receives, Foxton offers one of the most reliable and quality class III boating experiences on the Front Range. South Platte domes rise from river level and afford great scenery and climbing opportunities for the multi-sport inclined. Near the relics of the old Foxton town, an excellent stretch of continuous class III mini-creeking exists where novice and intermediate boaters can hone their skills by weaving through boulder garden rapids. At the road junction exists a decent play spot in the form of a small wave that can be front-surfed, followed by a dynamic hole that gets better as water levels increase. The hole is quite good for practicing spins, cartwheels and blunts as low as 300 cfs.

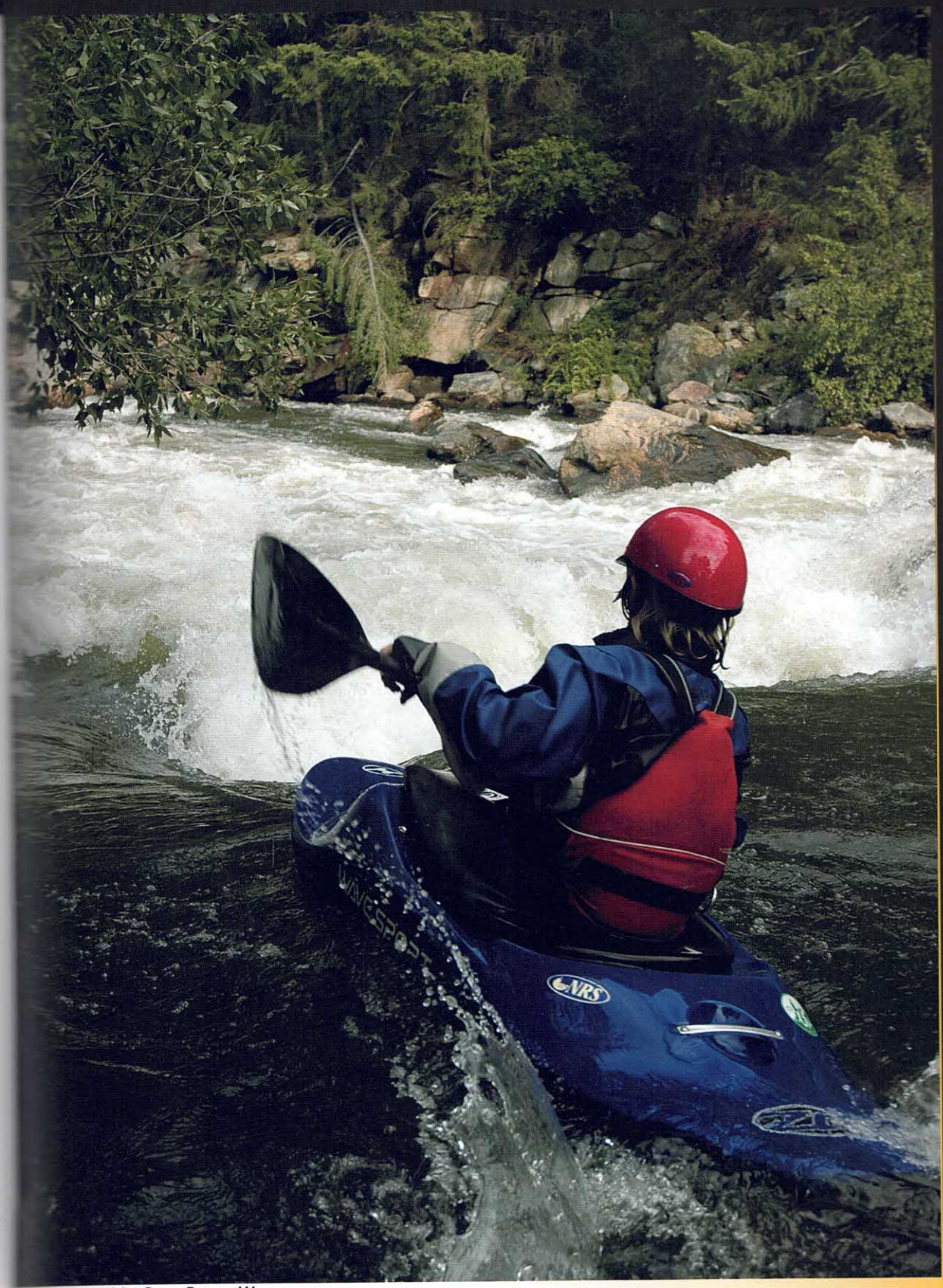
Directions: Take S Foxton Rd. south from Hwy 285 to where it meets the river at the junction of S. Platte River Road (96). One mile right is the Cloud Crest Bridge, adequately above the boulder gardens, but Buffalo Creek works as well for a put-in. Multiple take-outs exist about three miles below the junction, but paddlers looking for a longer run should continue to the confluence (Waterton put-in).

CFS	150<min<400<best
Class	III<600<IV-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	65 fpm action
Length	1 mile crux, variable
Season	April to September
Gauge	NF SP @ Pine
Put-in	Buffalo Creek
Take-out	Dome Rock

KM ♦ Foxton Boulder Garden (top)

Adam Welch/adamwelch.net ♦ Randy Welch ♦ first day out of a Dancer, 30 years paddling, Foxton

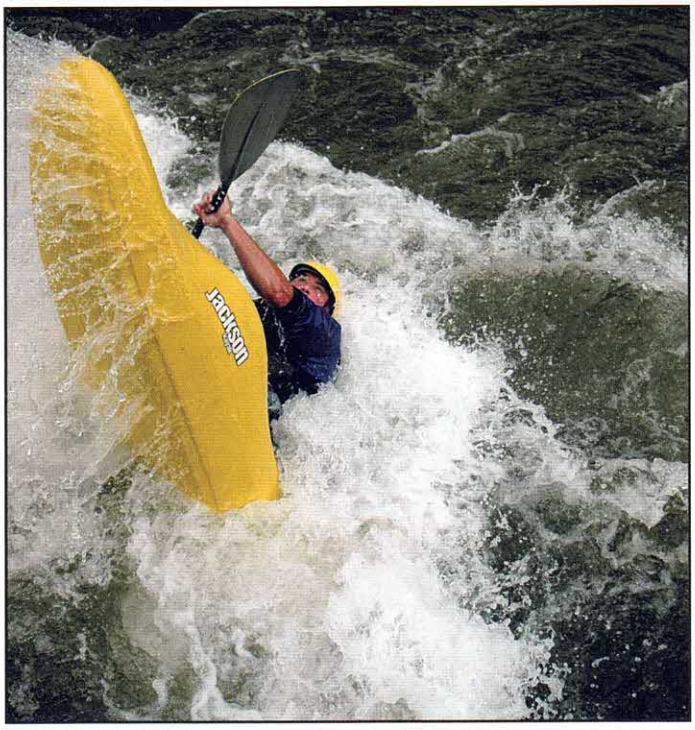
NEAR THE OLD FOXTON TOWN, AN EXCELLENT STRETCH OF CONTINUOUS CLASS III MINI-CREEKING EXISTS WHERE NOVICE AND INTERMEDIATE BOATERS CAN HONE THEIR SKILLS BY WEAVING THROUGH BOULDER GARDEN RAPIDS.



KM ♦ GREEN BRIDGE, WATERTON

Waterton

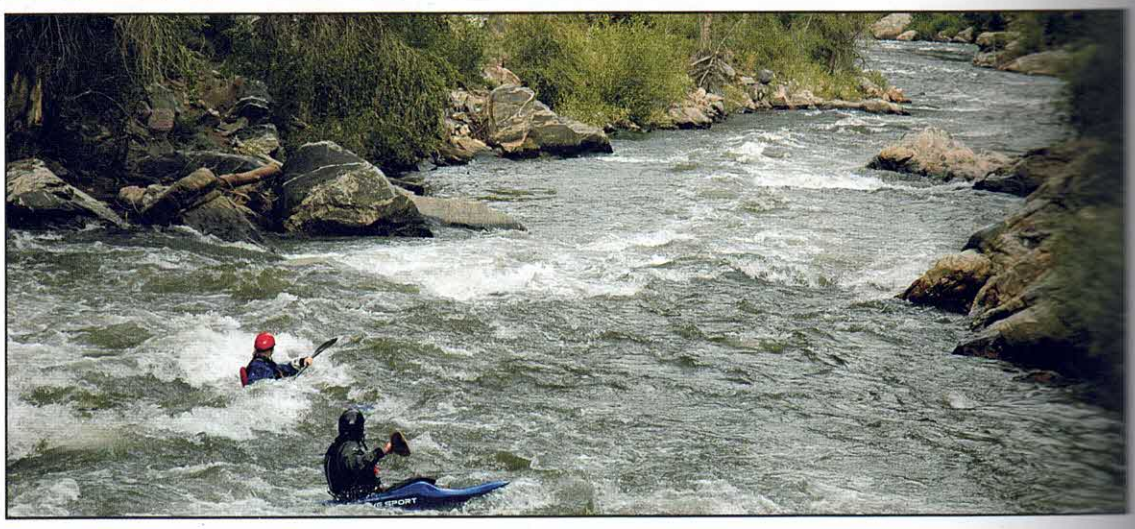
Waterton is the official off-season class III+ run for the greater Denver area paddler, in part because its better at lower flow. There is almost always enough water to get wet and there isn't a road that parallels this moderately scenic stretch beginning directly below the confluence of the NF and the SF of the South Platte. The drawback to this section is the length—a bit short to offer a full day of paddling and a bit of a long, boat-shouldering shuttle.



A short burst of solid and continuous rapids is preceded by a nice class II warm-up which includes some fun splat and rock spin opportunities. Taking a fall swim at Waterton is a right-of-passage during many a Front Range paddlers first season. A handful of attainments, eddy lines, and small holes up the excitement level for the advanced freestyler. When jonesing Waterton can be your savior. Bring your playboat—it will be lighter for the après paddle upstream carry.

Directions: Take S. Foxton Rd. south from Hwy 285 to where it meets the river at the junction of S. Platte River Rd (96 Rd). Turn left and continue 14.2 miles to the confluence and a large parking area. Put in, paddle down to the reservoir, and hike back out on the road.

CFS	200<min 300<optimal<500
Class	III (III+)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	75 fpm
Length	1.3 miles
Season	year round, no ice
Gauge	South Platte @ SP
Riv Access	S. Platte River Rd (96)



South Fork South Platte below Cheesman (no beta box)

I don't think anyone runs this anymore, but if looking for some adventurous class IV- with portages and a flatwater paddle out, and not concerned about the Denver Water Board giving you a ticket, then have at it.

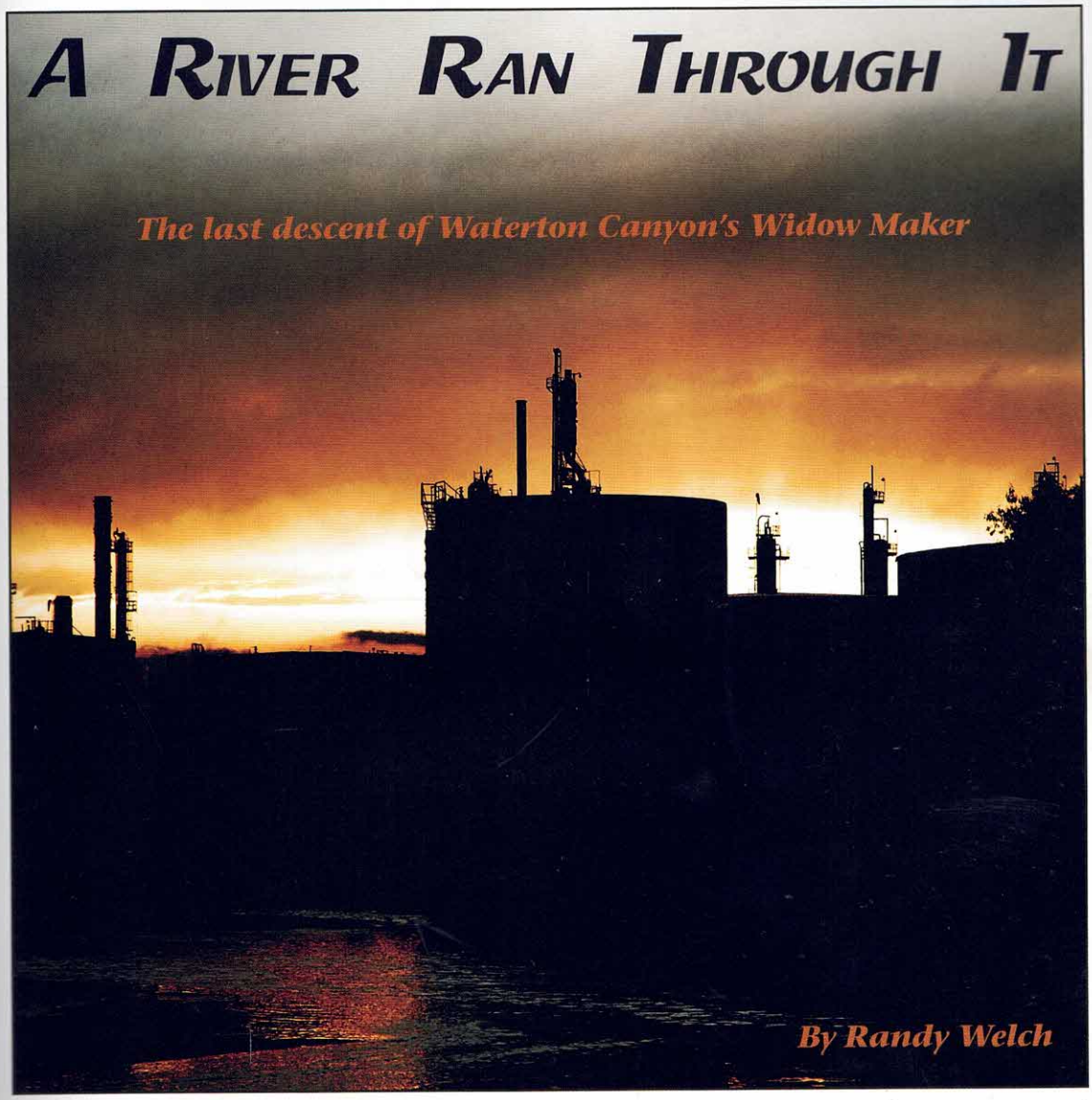
Directions: Put in below the Cheesman Dam. Take out on the Deckers stretch.

KM Lyle Phetteplace ♦Waterton eddy lines

KM Tina Swan ♦afternoon calm, Waterton

A River Ran Through It

The last descent of Waterton Canyon's Widow Maker



By Randy Welch

It was the best of river descents; it was the worst of river descents. It was stolen from the well-meaning, but in-the-dark water development bureaucracy. It was a last descent.

The two of us entered Waterton Canyon to answer the Widow Maker's last call. That steep, edge-of-the world section of the South Platte was scheduled to soon perform a mystery move, with no black attack, beneath the waters of Strontia Springs Dam. The handful of late '70s "hair-boaters" that had paddled it refused to suffer unproven types such as us. Time was running out. With contractor guards placed at each end of the canyon, concern for public safety was admirable but construction was not yet underway. Kayakers know, as did ancient map makers, "there be dragons" where the water drops off the edge. Early security primarily ensured that no one got in for another tickling of the whitewater dragon's tail. Shamefully, we convinced ourselves that, "if we weren't a nation of trespassers, why, we'd still be rowing the Thames for excitement."

Beachboy Tom Bryant would scramble into any gorge that promised "9-O" surfing and endos. I have the "bear-went-over-the-mountain" disease which forces me to seek out the twists and turns of every mile of navigable whitewater within a three-day drive. Rivers give the landscape a face. A kayak allows you to learn the lines of that face to the point where you recognize it by feel. The Widow Maker was a Front Range character wrinkle about to be erased from Colorado's smiling face. I assured Tom that topos indicated a sporting dragon's lair. In return, he would show me how to grab hold of the water's tails while avoiding a scalding.

Something like (but not necessarily exactly like) mid-

Tony Czech

canyon Strontia Springs Dam was needed to divert, not store, a portion of the river for ever-thirsty Denver. Efficient diversion did not require the planned 243' tall dam (1.7 river miles lost) but Bigfoot Denver wanted an "afterbay" to smooth out releases from the much larger Two Forks Dam, planned for the upstream canyon entrance.

Ben Harding, an impassioned speaker against the dam, was well informed on the canyon and alternatives to the dam. Incredibly, he was ignored by not only the dam's proponents, but also much of the conservation and whitewater community. In those last of the USA's big dam days, conservationists did not want to be seen as an obstacle to a "small" diversion scheme that would provide water needed for economic growth. Unfortunately, much of the whitewater community saw Waterton's ripping currents as only having value for a few cutting edge boaters.

Canyon entry was easy. For then as now, the first mile below the North Fork confluence was open to the public. Our technical preparation consisted of stitching together increasingly longer runs in the 14 miles of Clear Creek just upstream of Golden, another Front Range river reach, considered by most at the time to be impractical for kayaking. We prepared mentally by devoting our weekends to a quick, stealthy style of boating we dubbed "commando." (Many river sections were off limits in those days of yore.)

Steeper than most rivers its size, and without the sluice effect generally found on western rivers, Waterton's South Platte had the character of an eastern pool drop river. Crashing into detached fragments of the canyon wall, the water exploded into a Milky Way of shiny bits. No lasting harm done, in a miracle of physics the bits rejoined to make another velvety leap. At one point, while looking upstream from a boiling eddy, I saw Tom drop over a short lip and disappear along with all 13 feet of his silk-screened epoxy/Kevlar kayak. He then shot vertically into the air, jets of whitewater flaring away from both nostrils—dragons indeed.

At the Widow Maker's crux, many previously intrepid kayakers that came before had walked. The mother of all boulders sat on river right, halfway down a quarter-mile drop that seemingly led to the center of the earth. The billion year old mass forced the river 90 degrees to the left where the canyon wall immediately slammed it 90 degrees to the right. Could we run that half-swastika?

Charging the dragon like Saint George wannabes, Tom, in his oh so up-to-date equipment, wanted to test technique and skill. I, demonstrating that duct tape just might be the stuff needed to pull the expanding universe back together, wanted to know firsthand the liquid narrative that crossed the landscape and geologic history of Colorado. A split second from crash-landing on planetoid crux, we were smoothly moved left as the river checked its rush. Like many western river explorers before us, we were saved by the boil! A pillow rock without significant undercut, this dragon issued a truly smoky, roaring belch with but a flicker of flame.

Expecting the fight of our life, we had been surprised to find the run, though fast and powerful, to be, even for those days, completely tractable and even playful. What was it like? Think Clear Creek with water that is actually clear, and more of it; more room (no highway); better scenery... a bawdy house of trout. As always, the true dragon's lair was in the mind.

Having completed the steepest section of the canyon up to the dam site, a short waterfall with an ancient piece of drill rod protruding upwards, we had avoided notice by construction drillers and surveyors, and had only the security guard to pass. Our plan was to hike with the boats to the canyon's upstream entrance. Getting in had been no problem. The guard's rookery was perched well above the river near the end of an old narrow-gage railroad trestle. No Osprey, that old bird had his eye out for terrestrial prey and had little interest in the colorful debris on the frothy water below.

Always thinking, Tom suggested we avoid the rugged rocks at river level and simply walk up the railroad grade. Why, I thought, ruin a perfectly good sneak by getting caught? Willing to see what he had up his paddle jacket this time, I agreed anyway.

As we neared the bridge, a voice rang out. "Hey! What the ... are you doing in here? Hold it right there. I'm taking you in!" Just when I'm thinking Tom's nasal douche must have been severely over pressurized, he replies, "Turn us in, and everyone will know we got in past you. We walk out and only you will know."

"Well then keep walking. Get the ... out of here and don't come back!"

A fine farewell. Caught and released like undersized fish, we moved on, one to find where dragons might lurk, the other to find new ways to tickle supposed dragons with a double-bladed paddle.

As a foot in the door for Two Forks Dam, the afterbay version of Strontia Springs Dam began filling a couple of years later in 1982. The Widow Maker section was lost, though ultimately the door was slammed closed on the Two Forks Dam salesman. Had the diversion been constructed differently, and the conservation community awakened to the canyon's recreation value, Waterton Canyon would have become the signature Front Range half-day whitewater run, an easily accessible canyon filled with whooping weekend explorers and squirting play boats.

Here's to Waterton, may it be the last of such last descents.

Alex Henes Forrest Noble Superman at a respectable level, Baileys

Bailey Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	165	220	350	650
Character	go Mtn Bike	bony but okay	fast & forgiving	wholesome fun
Class	IV- (IV+, V, IV+)	IV (IV+, V, IV+)	IV+ (V-, V, V-)	V- (V, V+, V)
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	85 fpm, 160 fpm crux			
Remoteness	fairly, but various trails and roads can be found throughout the run			
Hitchability	good, when other boaters are present			
Length	10.5 miles (1 hr 30 min is respectable on the solo, no scout, no portage sprint)			
Season	May-July and shoulder-seasons dependant on plumbing to Denver			
Gauge	South Platte @ Bailey or Grant (usually similar)			
Put-in	bridge on FR 532 at the Farmer's Union			
Take-out	Pine Valley Open Space			

You're on the Front Range, it's October, and you're sitting in the living room watching Desperate Housewives from the most comfortable seat in the house, the cockpit of your favorite creek boat, when the phone rings. You pick up the receiver and hear three wonderful words spill from your obsessed-with-checking-the-internet-gauges friend of choice, "Bailey is running." This can mean various things depending on what your so-called friend means by running, but in any case it's time to start brainstorming the best excuse you can come up with to call in sick for work.

Bailey is your best chance for an off-season creek run on the Front Range due to its direct line of connection to Denver's municipal water needs. Nearly any time of year there's a chance of finding the cool and crisp jade water from the bottom of Dillon reservoir flowing through this marvelous little canyon. As a trade-off for the off-season flows, this section is often de-watered during the middle of summer. The whitewater isn't too hard, isn't too easy, and is easily portaged if need be.

The run starts off with some scenic Rocky Mountain class II-III. When the flat water is about to end, you go under a low bridge and on your left is a Bailey-boater's dream home. As you start to enter the main canyon and pass below a footbridge, you make a few easy moves and eddy on the right to scout/portage Four Falls. This first drop has a class III lead-in and class V consequences for a blown line. The remaining three "falls" make up an entertaining and straight forward class V- rapid. Sustained class IV+ continues just below Four Falls where the scenery and the boating is classic medium grade creeking—a great place to cut your teeth for continuous heads up read-and-run.

After a left turn and a straight away, a rapid will appear in the distance marked by a large boulder river left and the tops of trees on the horizon. Eddy high on the left to scout the toughest drop on the run, Super Max. This hourglass-shaped drop includes such attractions as a technical four-foot boof and a gaping undercut at low-water, or a fast-and-furious S-move into large and sticky hydraulics at high water. At low-water many will choose to portage the undercut and put in to run the remainder of the rapid, affectionately known as Tampax.

The two miles below Super Max is more continuous class III-IV. You may not notice, but you will pass Deer Creek tributary on your left, a few hundred yards above the rapid which bears its name. This is a fast and technical class V- rapid with a shallow run-out. It can easily be run on verbals or scouted on the left. The lead-in gets fun and juicy at higher flows.

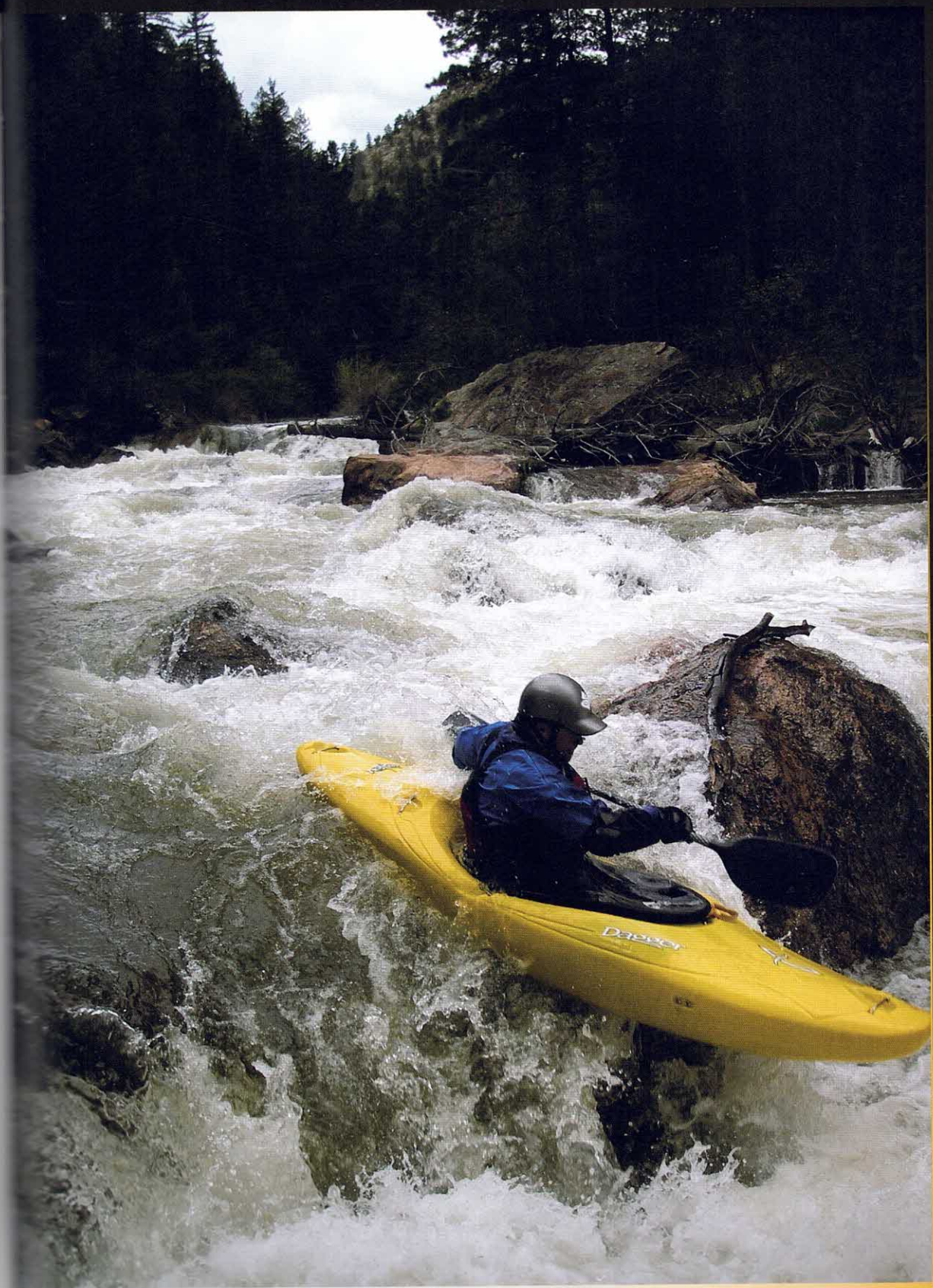
After Deer Creek the gradient mellows but there are still some cool wild-west settler's ruins, majestic orange granite domes, and class III rapids before the run really flattens out to a couple miles of class II. Forty-five minutes from Denver, accessible and scenic class IV creeking with a couple of solid drops to pump the adrenaline.

Directions

To reach the take-out, follow Hwy 285 southwest from Denver to Pine Junction. Go left onto Pine Valley Rd for six miles until you reach a hairpin left bend and a sign pointing towards Pine Valley Open Space. Take a right halfway through the hairpin turn and travel about a mile to the open space parking lot and park.

To get to the put-in, drive back out to Hwy 285 and continue south to the town of Bailey. Make the first left and drive a ¼ mile to a dirt road on the left leading into Farmers Union. Park off the road on the left, be courteous and put in just below the bridge over the river. If this is full, then an optional put-in exists behind the Alcohol Tobacco Firearms store.

You're sitting in the living room watching Desperate Housewives from the most comfortable seat in the house, the cockpit of your favorite creek boat, when the phone rings, and you know it's on.



D-Town • Bailey Canyon

ES. ▲ Brad Teets ▲ One of many lines on Five Falls, Baileys

Cheesman & Eleven-Mile

Cheesman Canyon

This is an interesting section. What was once the most hostile access situation in the state (and still may be) has rarely run in the last few years, and was likely affected by the Hayman Fire—although it's not known whether it has been for the better or worse. When it does have enough water to run, which is rare with the water storage upstream, and assuming the Sportsman's Paradise private fishing club doesn't arrest or physically attack you, then Cheesman Canyon is a wonderful adventure. This is a pristine canyon that contains steep, sieve-laden class V whitewater.

Through an amazing effort from Tim Kelley, American Whitewater, and many others, the Sportsman's Paradise agreed to a good faith deal in 2002 that has rarely been tested. The basic rules are for paddlers to launch tightly together between 9:00-11:00am (a must for first timers to finish before dark), stay in the boats, and be very quiet. It is very important for all kayakers to uphold their end of this deal. Failure to do so will likely lead to immediate arrest, and permanent closure in the future. Prior to putting on, every group MUST check the American Whitewater web site and mountainbuzz.com for updated access information.

The names of the drops are chronologically known as Club Dues, Let's Make a Deal, Penis Buster Parfait, Slap your Mama, Tiger Den, Burmese Punji Stick, Underprivileged, Dos Chaos, and Slide for Life. The signature drops are the 12' vert Slap your Mama, and the 15' Slide for Life. These are also two of the cleanest, as most drops contain a sieve, undercut, or some sort of multi-channel combo—often with only one line that goes. It's imperative for teams to scout every blind corner and horizon line, as mandatory portages will be encountered—and some portages are likely out of preference. Portaging is aided by a fisherman's trail on river left.

Access has recently been tricky, since the Hayman Fire encouraged the closing of many of the take-out area's back roads. This has included the Corral Creek access road, the best and most reasonable access for keeping this run to a day-trip length. If the gate is open, then use this for the take-out. If closed then it is an option to continue all the way to and across Cheesman Reservoir, but I recommend hiking the steep three-mile Corral Creek Road to FR 211.

CFS	250<min<300<best
Class	V (NR)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	240 fpm crux
Length	7.3 miles
Season	dam control & rare
Gauge	SP nr Lake George
Put-in	Happy Meadows CG
Take-out	Corral Creek

Directions: From 77 Rd, take FR 211 6.7 miles to the right turn at Corral Creek. Figure out a plan from here based on the status of the gate, and if open be prepared for 4WD conditions. To reach the put-in, return to 77 Rd and head South, turning left on 112 Rd. Put in at Happy Meadows CG, or continue to a pull-off slightly downstream, but NOT all the way to the Sportsman's Paradise gate.

Eleven-Mile Canyon

Eleven-Mile is part of the same water storage system as Cheesman and also rarely gets a runnable release. When it does run, the whitewater is of the quality large granite boulder garden variety. A mellow class III gradient through the center of the canyon splits the action of this easily scouted roadside run. The only class IV rapid comes just upstream of the halfway point. Watch for wood.

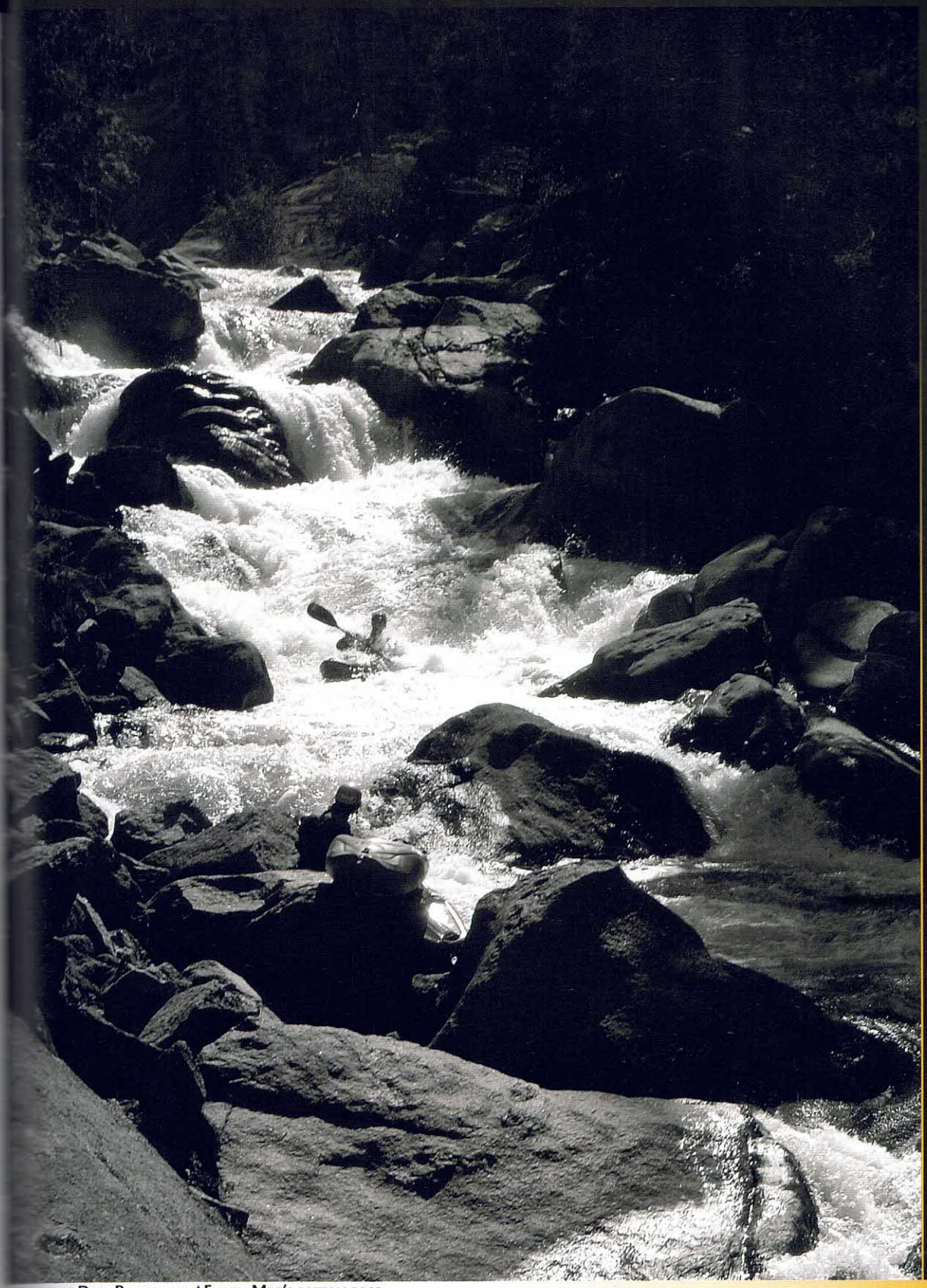
Looking for beta on the Vs? They are located at the put-in and take-out, strategically placed to make you drive more if looking for adrenaline, and encouraging a lower put-in and earlier take-out for class III paddlers. The first is a drop that pinches down abruptly at the end, where a pin spot is exposed at low flow, and a mean hole at higher levels. Paddlers unsure of their ability to clean the line through here should start below this V-. The take-out drop is the real highlight—a class V stair-stepping boof-o-matic affair that generates some excellent velocity. More than a handful of paddling groups are guilty of running the take-out drop, then driving to the put-in and running the put-in drop.

CFS	200<min<400<best
Class	III (V-, IV+, V)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	65 fpm
Length	8 miles
Season	May to August
Gauge	SP nr Lake George
Put-in	Eleven Mile Res
Take-out	96 Rd

Directions: From Lake George, take 96 Rd up the Eleven-Mile Canyon towards the Eleven-Mile Reservoir. The road parallels the river for the most interesting whitewater.

Lyle Phetteplace ♦ Dos Chaos

When the South Fork of the South Platte finally runs the rock is of the high-quality granite variety, creating a maze of shoots, boofs and dufeks.



Dave Bumgarner ♦Eleven Mile's bottom drop

Bear Creek & Turkey Creek

Bear Creek

Stuffed in a pocket of hills to the west of Denver, Morrison is primarily known for the famous Red Rocks Amphitheater and a handful of mountain bike rides that offer more excitement than the local nightlife. Morrison could also lay claim as the host city to the best local creek run available to metro Denverites, if the authorities weren't preoccupied figuring out which law the kayakers were breaking by being on the river. More importantly, Bear Creek would have to run more than every few years.

The current lack-of-flow can partially be contributed to Evergreen Lake, and threats have been made to turn the entire Bear Creek valley into the newest edition of front-range reservoirs. Runnable flows occur only in heavy-snow years, and often require a low-elevation spring blizzard to see any runoff at all. The spring of 2004 seemed to clear things up with the police, and the only part of Bear Creek that kayakers are supposed to avoid is the most difficult drop on the run, No Fun Falls. Fun enforcement has fortunately been absent at the crux falls, which are regularly run.

Although upstream put-ins are possible, the most popular is at Idledale above the private bridge. No Scout Falls comes up quickly, with a 3' vert that leads into an S-turn, and unfortunately has multiple wood collection points. It's easy when clean, so run it blind to avoid landowner conflicts, sending a probe first if necessary. No Fun Falls is about one mile from the top (after the second brick wall), and is easy to scout from the road. A handful of small slides, boofs, and overhanging vegetation keep paddlers busy in between the named drops. A diversion dam, the largest runnable vert of the run, can be used as an optional take-out. Hair of the Bear is the grand finale of drops, holes, and encroaching branches before the take-out at Morrison City Park.

CFS	120<min<150<low 300<optimal<600
Class	IV+ (V-s)<300<V-
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	185 fpm
Length	3 miles
Season	May-June with heavy low-elevation H2O
Gauge	Bear Crk @ Morrison
Put-in	Idledale
Take-out	Morrison City Park

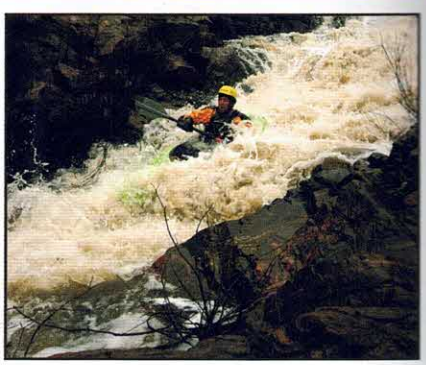
Before work weekday runs are especially prized, even better with a foot of fresh snow.

Directions: The run is roadside to Hwy 74. From Morrison, take Hwy 8 south of Hwy 74 a couple hundred yards, and turn right to Morrison City Park. Drive west on Hwy 74 approximately three miles to Idledale. There are obvious pullouts at the diversion dam and No Fun Falls to aide in pre-scouting.

Turkey Creek (no beta box)

Calling this the smaller sister of Bear Creek is a retarded statement. And sadly true. Paralleling Hwy 285 as it cuts through the first of the foothills is a road gutter that used to be the perpetually dry Turkey Creek. At least the cement helps it run at minimum levels of 100 cfs, found under similar circumstances as a Bear Creek season. The three rapids—Single-track, Checker, and Napa, describe the run perfectly as a boat-width wide single-track littered with stream side car parts. Scout from the east bound dirt turnouts, just east of the Parmalee Gulch exit.

Directions: There is no way in hell that I will ever waste my time by giving you specific directions to this drainage ditch.



Alex Henes Elam Fichter ♦No Fun Falls entrance set

Mark Cohen Marky Mark from Winter Park ♦Turkey Creek

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Union Whitewater Park

Although lacking the shoreline aesthetics of Confluence, the Union Park does attract a number of south Denver paddlers, and the water quality is slightly better. Okay, so it isn't that much better, and the quality plummets to levels similar to Confluence immediately after a rainstorm. The real benefit is that the place tends to run a little more often, and the features are the best of the three Denver area manmade parks—specifically Hollywood Hole, which dishes up fat blunts faster than Thurgood Jenkins smokes'em. It's the only true expert freestyle feature in Denver, but a handful of friendly features surround the star.

About seven of the ledges can be found in this 1/3-mile stretch, and a bonus feature that is okay for loops is around the corner for paddlers willing to explore, and willing to hike the longer distance back up the trail. The first feature is the best of the easy ones, formed from a slanted concrete slab that creates a friendly symmetrical hole over a shallow bottom. Stay flat for blasts and spins, and tuck tight when you flip. Loops here are usually weak.

Feature number two is the infamous Hollywood Hole, although it acts like a wave at lower levels. Right blunts, left clean spins, and an occasional non-aerial bread-and-butter are the highlights here. It's even steep enough to sneak in an occasional loop—but not easy to stick the landing. The eddy lines are brutal for rolling, and therefore great practice or a common swim spot, depending on your skill level.

CFS	200<min<400 750<Hollywood<2000
Class	III (IV- features)
Eddy	excellent
Quality	★★★★
Season	May to July (dam)
Gauge	SP blw Union Ave
Riv Access	Union St & Santa Fe

A number of features are below this but none of them are that great, until you get to the last one. It's a trashy little beast that is good for violent hole rides. Less experienced paddlers will want to avoid this one completely, and more advanced paddlers can throw left until they finally flush. Loops are okay.

Downstream is the bonus loop feature. Throw them big, because that's about all you can do. The cartwheeling is mediocre, and eddy access here is poor relative to the rest.

Directions: Find Santa Fe on a Denver map (Hwy 85), and take it to the intersection of Union St (south of Hampden, near a porn shop). Turn west, cross the river, and turn right into the parking lot. Boaters generally park at the upstream side of the lot, away from the baseball fields.

Santa Fe & Mississippi park-and-play

This feature is prime at about the same levels as Hollywood. Just upstream of the intersection, the feature is found on river right where a small but good eddy is available. A symmetrical pocket is fun for spins and a few ends, but you will have to muscle the boat around to keep from flushing. Still, it's better than most of the Golden features at average flows, though not as convenient. A bike path parallels the river left side here (just as it does at Union), and helps to make it park-and-play friendly. Park upstream on the same side, where a few industrial parking areas can be utilized.

CFS	600<prime<900
Class	III-
Eddy	okay
Quality	★★★
Season	May to July
Gauge	SP blw Union Ave
Riv Access	Santa Fe & Mississippi

South Denver Beginner Float (no beta box)

Stuck in Highlands Ranch and looking for an in-town float? Desperate to paddle class III-? Weird. But if you are, and don't mind the associated pollution, then start at C-470. Paddlers without a roll and drunken inner tubers should be fine at most levels less than 1000. Take-outs exist at the Mineral Street park-and-ride or numerous other places. I recommend cruising down to Union for a grand finale. It's the most scenic metro float, which isn't saying much.

Directions: Put in off of C-470, and take out at the Whitewater Park.

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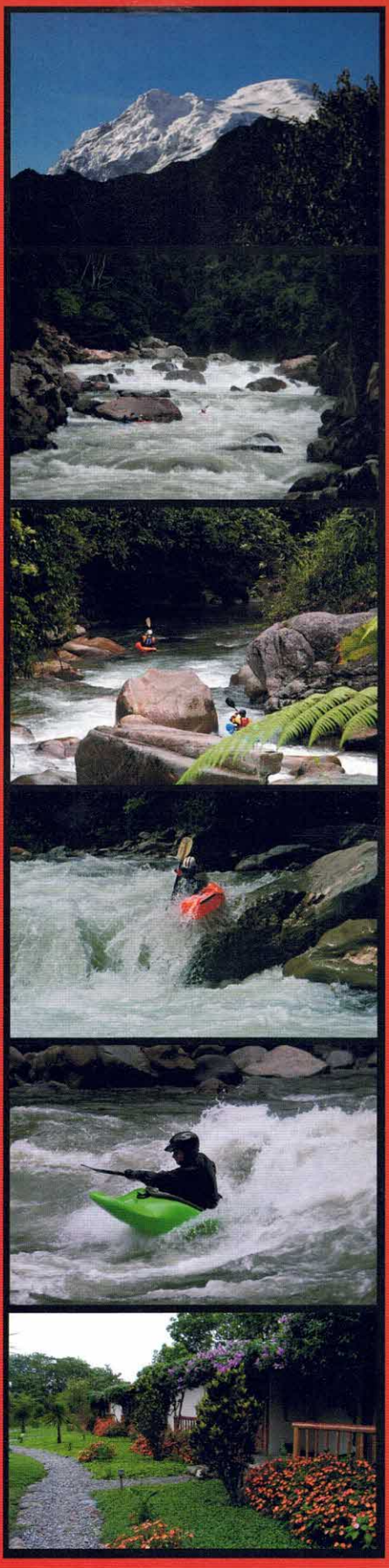


Quijos Cosanga Jondachi Misahuallí Jatunyacu Otongo

Confluence Park

Confluence WWP is located in the heart of Downtown Denver, at the focal point of a landscape architect's dream of grassy fields, perfectly placed rocks, and sculpted concrete walkways. A place where kids, young lovers, and white collar workers can escape the high rise world that surrounds them, and spend a few moments eating lunch while basking in the warm spring sun. Beautiful ... kinda.

The nicknames hint at the underlying problem to this fairy tale locale—consewage, confluenza, consludge. The features were originally named as Hepatitis A through D, and it's even been referred to as kayaking's cheap hooker, partially due to stolen wallets. Although the judgements are a bit harsh, I have narrowly avoided stepping on a syringe while barefoot, and an immediate shower to flush the eyes, avoid the skin rash, and disinfect the body will be necessary. By the same token, the uncomfortably warm waters of Confluence have offered a much needed freestyle session between college classes, to the disdain of my classmates as I returned to statistics class with smelly wet hair.

Confluence is best during or after high water, because the features are either big, or all of the silt that has built up over the winter finally gets flushed out of the eddies. The main WWP area was originally built as a slalom course, located on the backside of the Flagship REI store. Because of it, the play features are generally mediocre, and the eddies swirly, making flatwater/squirt move combos fun. Beginners can develop their skills here, and avoid the crowds of the much cleaner Golden WWP.

As flows get higher the features get better. The 20th street bridge wave (Masterblaster) comes into its own at 1600, and at a level of 3000+ the Trestle Wave below the train bridge is four star. Both levels usually happen during and immediately after a big rainstorm, since the water dumps directly into the river from the surrounding concrete jungle. Veterans will plan most trips when they start seeing cars stalled out in Denver side-street puddles.

CFS	200<min<600<best 1600<prime
Class	III-
Eddy	good
Quality	★★★
Season	March to October
Gauge	South Platte @ Denver
Riv Access	Platte River Drive

Denver's Cherry Creek joins the South Platte here, and when Cherry Creek is flooding, the last manmade ledge creates what some have claimed, "...is the best hole in Denver!" Cherry Creek has also been run, which contains multiple manmade drops of varying okay-to-poor quality, and an occasional pedestrian bridge turned sieve at runnable flows.

Directions: The staging area can be found by exiting I-25 at the 23rd Ave exit (put-in) or the 20th Ave exit (take-out), and parking somewhere between the two. There is some parking just upstream of the REI, but it is limited, so be creative and willing to walk a bit.

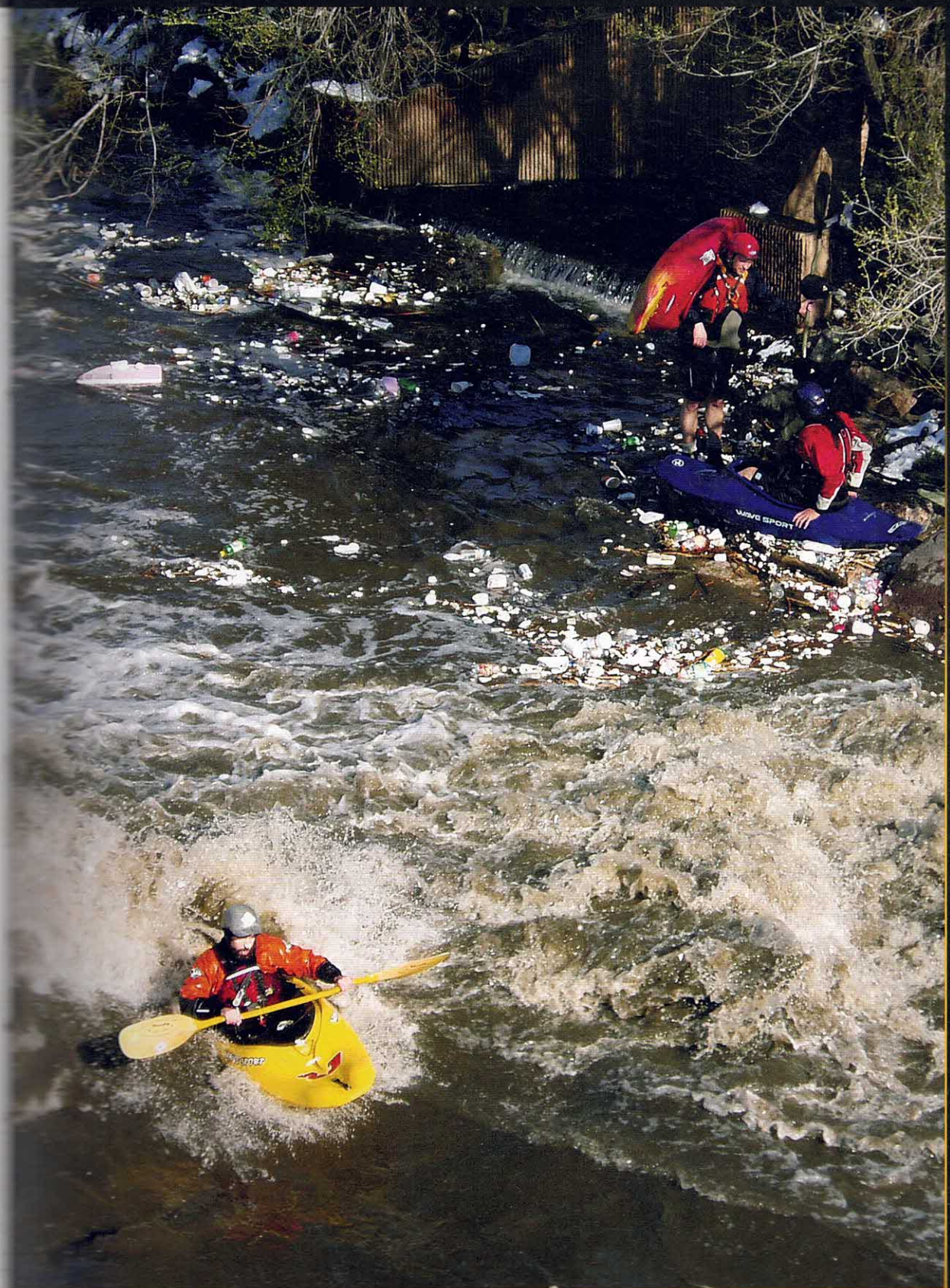
Golden Park

Golden WWP is the focal point of the greater Denver kayaking scene. This is where feeble beginners take their first strokes and swims, intermediates attain their first squirt or vertical end, and stories resonate in the parking lot about the haps of the Colorado kayaking world. It's a place where seasoned freestyle pro's, former Olympic slalom racers, shirtless inner tubers, and nervous beginners share eddies and laughs together. Along the walkway, dogs run wild, joggers weave around the scattered boats and a youth-girls softball game fills the night air as the sun drops behind the towering hills that paragliders launch from.

CFS	300<min<1000<better
Class	II+
Eddy	tons
Quality	★★★
Season	April to August
Gauge	Clear Crk @ Golden
Riv Access	10th Street

Adam Welch/adamwelch.net Monica Giamellaro Golden

At the heart of Denver, deep within the downtown grid of high rises, Confluence offers the only true metro kayaking experience—complete with pollution and REI spectators.



D-Town • Confluence & Golden

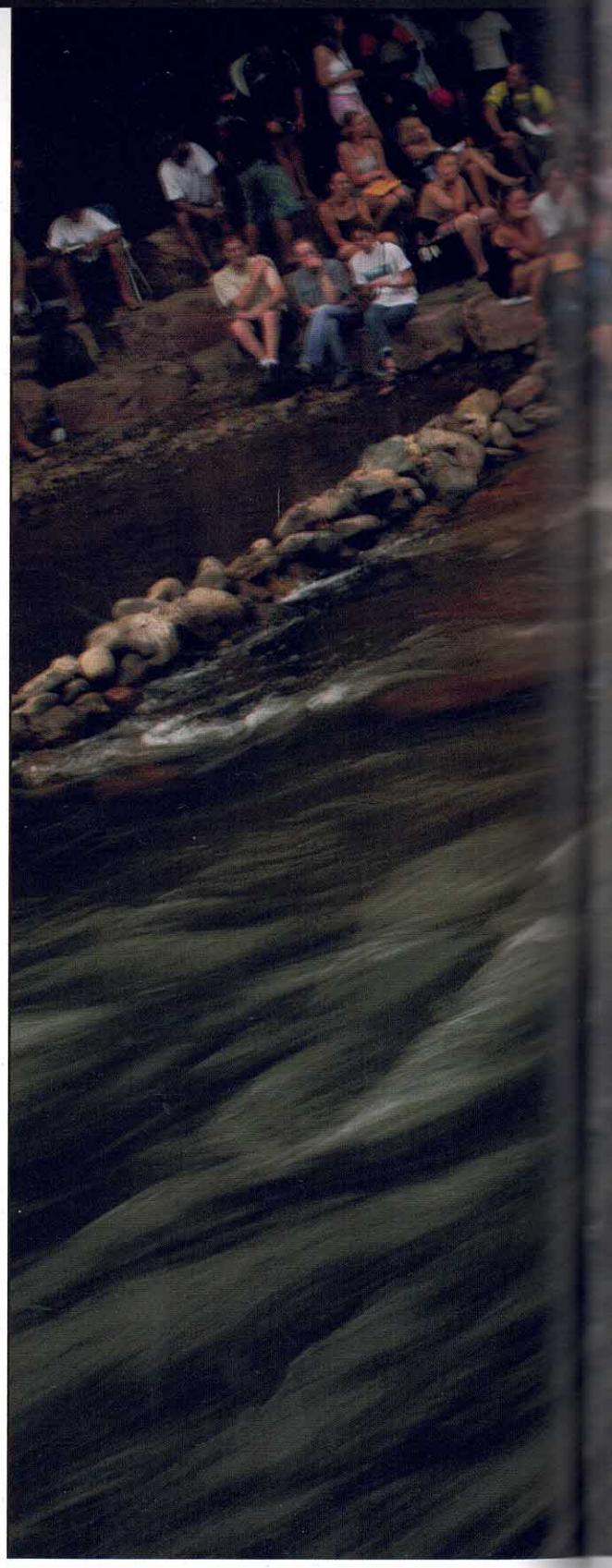
As can be expected from the busiest social scene perhaps anywhere in whitewater, the crowds will be a major influence on a Golden WWP experience. Paddlers that come expecting the mass social scene, are willing to deal with an interesting parking lot, and just want to talk shit about kayaking as much as they want to kayak will love the afternoon retreat that the relatively clean waters of Clear Creek provide. Kayakers looking to jump in for a super sick freestyle session with one or two bros will be thoroughly disappointed in both the features and the off-river experience. The afternoons are always crowded, Wednesday's and Thursday's especially, with a number of community competitions and demos held weekly. The weekends see a mix of people enjoying the park and meeting here to run Lower Clear Creek.

There are a number of different features available over this ½ mile long course, but only four that are consistently good for freestyle moves. From top to bottom they are James Wave, the Bleacher Hole, Library Wave, and Bingo just downstream of the Washington St. bridge. Advanced paddlers will want as much water as possible to keep from hitting the bottom in the features while cartwheeling, the major disappointment of the park. Flows over 450 cfs usually make it worth the crosstown drive for Denverites. Paddlers have been known to frequent the park at levels well under 300 cfs, so the recommended minimum won't hold true for everyone.

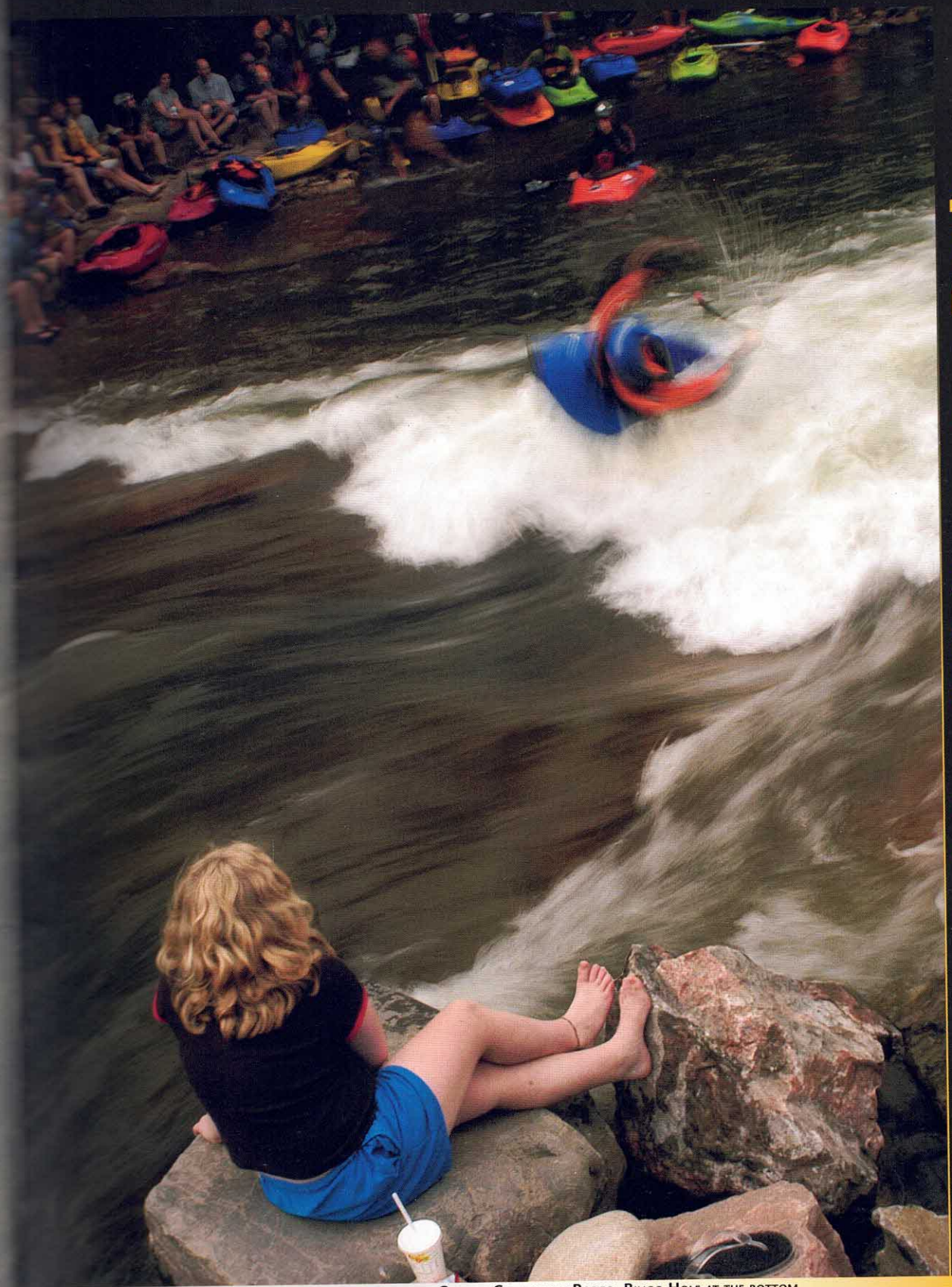
I should note that the Bleacher Hole used to be so good that paddlers would drive from all over the state just to hit it. At a time when the hottest boat was an Ultrafuge, paddlers could hit 20+ ends with their hands! Despite the doubling of the number of features, unfortunate changes to the riverbed have decreased the quality of the best features, and the design board seems more concerned with keeping the course slalom friendly rather than freestyle friendly. Hopefully changes will occur creating a better freestyle feature, and the park's glory days will return.

Directions: Find Golden on a map, and drive there. The main drag is Washington St., and river access can be found upstream of the Washington St. bridge via 10th street. The only exception is the Bingo hole, just downstream of the bridge. Park at the designated WWP parking, not at the library.

Ethics: Some freestyle eddy ethics will improve your experience at a Denver WWP. Beginners have the right of way. River enthusiasts paddling through have the right of way. Freestylers dropping in from the top need to receive the okay from the next person in line. Just because the eddy line on river right is shorter than the left, doesn't mean you can snake those waiting patiently in the river left eddy. The girl in the Foreplay can drop in whenever she wants. Have fun, play games, be polite.



Welcome to the busiest scene in whitewater. Demo days, community freestyle competitions, slalom racers and inner tubers all sharing the longest whitewater park in the Rockies.



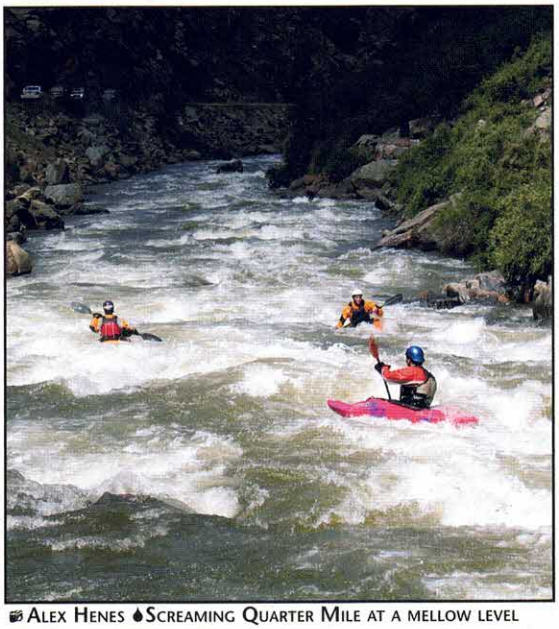
Adam Welch/adamwelch.net ♦center stage at a Golden Community Rodeo, Bingo Hole at the bottom

Lower Clear Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	400	600	1200	2000
Character	shallow blast rock	padded & friendly	eddies smaller	fast & continuous
Class	III+ (IV-, IV+, IV-)	IV- (V-, IV)	IV+ (V-)	V-
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★
Gradient	85 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good from other boaters			
Length	5.7 miles (variable)			
Season	May-July			
Gauge	Clear Creek @ Golden			
Put-in	mm 267, below Rigor Mortis			
Take-out	Golden WWP, or at Tunnel #1			

Servicing the greater Denver and Boulder area, Clear Creek is the most popular after-work river in the state. Paralleling Hwy 6 west of Golden for all but the last mile, the Lower run attracts the most crowds due to the short drive, convenient Golden WWP take-out, and the relatively easy whitewater. Predominately class III+ with a splash of IV, paddlers that find themselves over their head can retreat to the road, making this an okay stretch to learn on, although it would be better if it contained less blast-rock and a few more big eddies.

Putting in just below Rigor Mortis (V), at a river left pull-off before the first bridge, gives paddlers a reasonably long eddy-catching warm-up before arriving at the first drop, Elbow Falls (IV). At lower flows this is a stout ledge with a large hole on river left, and a tight line to thread on the right next to one of the few cliff walls on the run. At higher water Elbow Falls cleans up substantially.



Alex Henes ♦ Screaming Quarter Mile at a mellow level

The second class IV comes in the second half of the run, recognizable by an abrupt left bend above the lip providing a large eddy to regroup and/or scout on river left. Screaming Quarter Mile is just that, a ¼-mile set of waves, laterals, and occasional rocks to dodge, but the difficulty rarely gets over class IV since a center line will deliver paddlers to the bottom unscathed—as long as they aggressively paddle.

Remain heads up, because the most significant hazard and most often portage of the run, the Diversion Dam, lies less than a ½-mile from the bottom of Screaming. Although not very difficult, the sketch factor is high with a big hole backed up by a pile of sharp rocks in the run-out. Being upright is mandatory, and missing the hole is desirable, although it is possible to dig out of it once control is gained after a flurry of ends. Tuck tight while may tagging towards the conclusion of a missed line. The move is V-, but if the hole ever becomes terminal expect a mandatory portage.

There is a possible take-out at Tunnel #1, or take out above the Diversion Dam and hike down a ¼-mile. I prefer to paddle the short distance to the WWP park to enjoy the class III play and the most scenic part of the run. Take all channels to the right, or risk ending up in a Coors can (bottle if lucky).

Directions

Use the Golden WWP as the take-out, via 10th street. To head upstream from the park, turn left on Washington, and then left on Hwy 58. Continue straight at the light, on what is now Hwy 6 (use the left pull-off just before Tunnel #1 as an optional take-out). Continue to mm 267, and use the left pull-off downstream of the first bridge, and thus below Rigor Mortis.

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Upper CC & Black Rock

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	250	350	500	850
Character	Elmo	Kermit	Ms. Piggy	Animal
Upper Class	IV	IV	IV (IV+)	IV+
Black R Class	V- (V)	V- (V)	V- (V x2)	V (V+)
Upper Quality	★	★★	★★★	★★★★
Black R Quality	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★
Gradient	135 fpm action			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good with boaters, fair with drunken gamblers			
Length	5.5 miles			
Season	May to July			
Gauge	Clear Creek @ Golden			
Put-in	Kermits or above Black Rock			
Take-out	Above Black Rock near mm 263 or at Rigor Mortis near mm 267			

Although far from the top of the drainage, the upper sections of Clear Creek Canyon contain the most pushy and difficult whitewater of the entire creek. A number of questionable characters from the Front Range prefer to frequent this stretch at high flows, with the sun setting fast, and no time for eddies. The solo run on Rigor is the bad day cure for paddlers in desperate need of some class V meditation to clear the mind, body and soul.

Upper Clear Creek

This section begins at the notorious biker's hangout, Kermits Restaurant, and marks the beginning of Clear Creek's departure from the I-70 corridor. This is not the Numbers class IV. This is Clear Creek, emphasis on creek. Tight, fast, sharp and shallow are all adjectives that adequately describe the boating from Kermit's down to the canyon mouth above Golden. You may be surprised to see a Front Range commercial raft operation running this stretch but don't get too lackadaisical. This is not one of those stretches that automatically gets downgraded because it gets rafted.

There are a couple of abrupt ledges called the Beaver Drops near the beginning of this run to get you warmed up. Fun after work boogie persists until you reach Double Knife, the signature rapid of the run. This is a shelf with multiple lines followed by a good size hole. The Terminator Holes are the last big punches to your gut before you either take out or continue on down the Hwy 6 segment of Clear Creek.

Black Rock

Black Rock is the hard-run that Denver area beginners hear stories of carnage about and wish for the day when those stories are about them. Not super challenging, but not super easy, with a sizable rapid at the take-out. This is a run that can keep a local bound creeker in shape or provide a stepping stone towards future wilderness creek boating adventures. Action packed and short enough to service the metro area afterwork creeker.

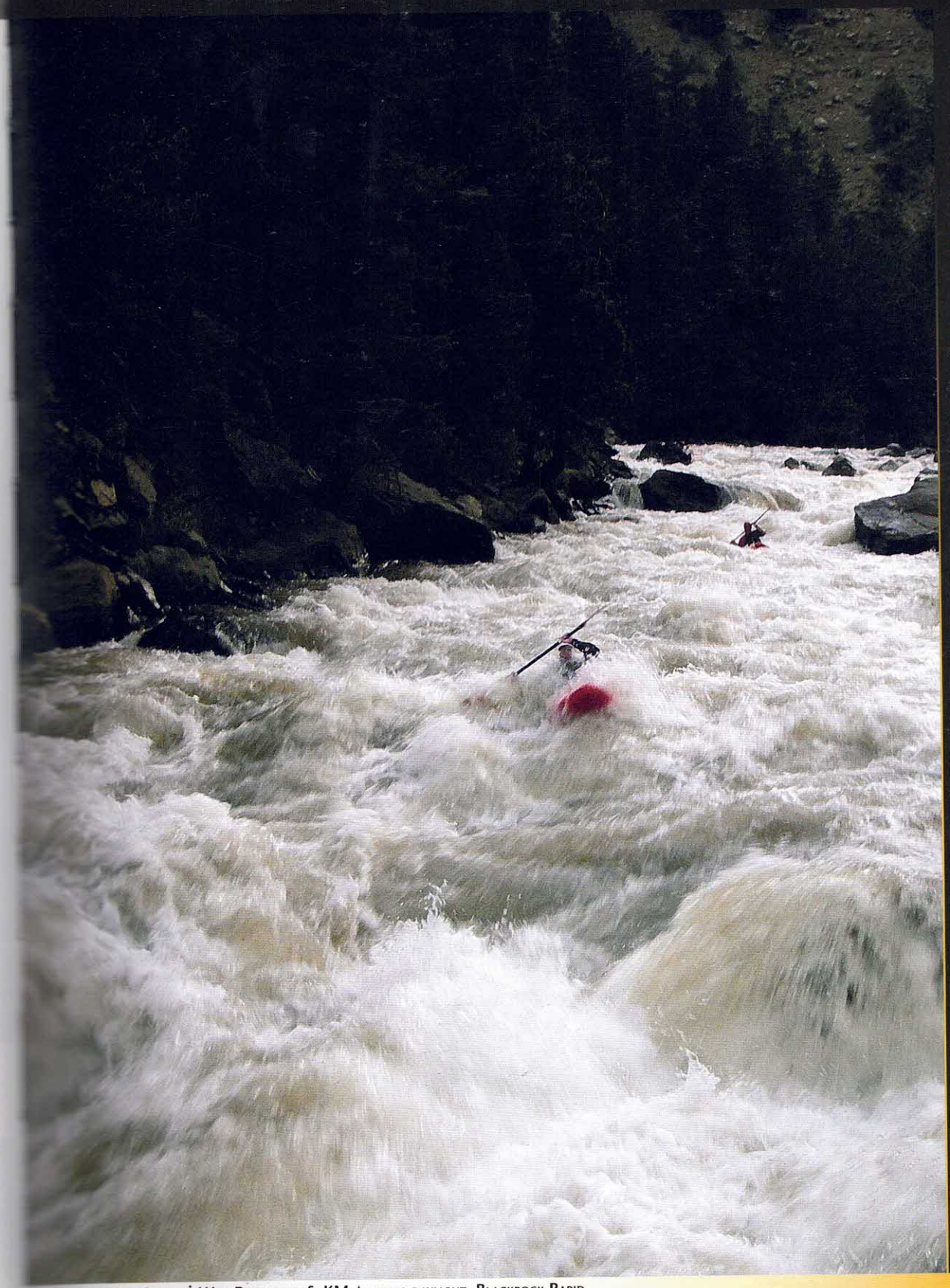
The runs namesake rapid is a relatively easy but long boulder garden, beginning below a big black rock, readily apparent from Hwy 6 around mm 264. More mild boogie water later, a horizon line appears after the creek finds its way out from under the highway. There is a cliff wall looming on river left signaling the CC Narrows. A tough entrance leads quickly into Mr. Bill, a sizeable hole 2/3 into the rapid. Most sneak on the far right, but at some levels paddlers punch it. The quick run-out mellows into one last breather, a necessary break before the finale.

The walls close in and some big boulders crop up on river right, marking Rigor Mortis. A sometimes tricky entrance leads into a fast ramp and a subtle pillow move on the right to avoid the meat—a Campbell's chunky soup type hole, which is difficult to exit if you end up facing the wall. Go right of the house rock in the run-out, especially if you're swimming. Take out on river left downstream of the highway crossing and pop a cold one. You've earned it. Now get back to the rat race you go-getter you.

Directions

The put-in for Upper Clear Creek is at the pullout below Kermit's Restaurant. The take-out is below the Hwy 119/Hwy 6 junction, on river left. The put-in for the Black Rock run is at the big pull-off near mm 263. The take-out is on the downstream side of the bridge directly below Rigor Mortis rapid near mm 267.

A NUMBER OF QUESTIONABLE CHARACTERS FROM THE FRONT RANGE PREFER TO FREQUENT THIS STRETCH AT HIGH FLOWS, WITH THE SUN SETTING FAST, AND NO TIME FOR EDDIES.



TINA SWAN WILL RAWSTROM & KM RACING DAYLIGHT, BLACKROCK RAPID

Lawson Hole to Kermits

Lawson Hole

While the overly vocal mountain dwellers, area creek boaters, and occasionally guidebook authors are spouting about how the freestyle options of Denver and Golden are relatively poor, the Lawson hole has been quietly holding up the middle finger for a number of years, and rightfully so. It's not that big, nor that epic, but the play is the best in the area, and when prime will give any other park-and-play feature in the state a run for the title of having the most hole moves available. Looking for good pop? It's not uncommon to see paddlers looping their creekboat before cruising downstream for the run below.

The easily accessible hole is a half hour jaunt up I-70 from the edge of Denver, and the combinations of runs above and below are pretty good, although the hole rats will stick to the feature, which is rarely as crowded as Golden. The best can hit any hole trick that's been invented so far, and the rest of us can just dial in the big loops, and long combination rides. A few other ledges are here, but they pale in comparison.

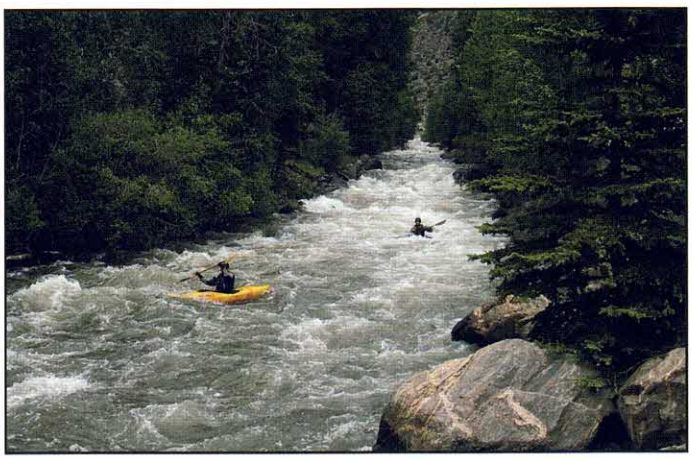
Directions: To get to Lawson, use exit 233 when traveling the I-70 EB lanes, turning right immediately, crossing the culvert bridge, turning right, driving about a half mile, and putting in on the raft company land. If traveling WB, exit 234 at Downieville, turn right then left onto the frontage road, and continue weaving through the neighborhoods until you reach the culvert bridge.

CFS	250<min 350<optimal<800<big
Class	III+<600<IV-
Eddy	great
Quality	★★★★★
Season	May to July
Gauge	Clear Crk @ Dumont
Riv Access	I-70 exit 233 or 234

Dumont

There is some whitewater above here, downstream of the West Fork confluence, but I prefer to put in at the hole. Downstream is the Dumont section, one of the best IV- to IV+ runs near Denver. A handful of ledges make things exciting at lower flow, allowing for okay eddy hopping lines, or novice boof practice. As the level gets higher the few eddies completely disappear, and the afterwork posse can cruise it blue-angel style, avoiding the occasional sleeper hole by properly negotiating the never-ending wave train.

The first take-out is found near the defunct exit 239 on the west edge of Idaho Springs. Unfortunately, this take-out skips the largest rapid on the run found just below, known as Outer Limits. The OL is a simple affair, with a hole to miss that is located on the inside of the right bend. The biggest waves of the run will float you to safety. The Mount Evans Exit 240 is just below, where paddlers can opt to take out on river right.



Directions: Put in at the Lawson Hole. Stanley Drive leads to the take-out above Outer Limits rapid. A number of in-town river access points can be used. The town park is a good meeting point.

CFS	200<min<600<med 1000<high
Class	IV-<800<IV+
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	70 fpm
Length	6 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	Clear Crk @ Dumont
Put-in	Lawson Hole
Take-out	Idaho Springs

Idaho Springs to Kermits (no beta box)

Continuing through town sees mellower and more civilization affected class III+ paddling. A few manmade ledges in town are at the park (near 23rd & Colorado), but I've never caught these when the play is good. The river has more of a manmade streambed than the rest of the sections, but it could just be more noticeable because the action is mostly non-existent. The river will cross under the I-70 bridge, and continue parallel to Hwy 6. Take out on the left at the Kermit's biker bar, or just drop into Upper Clear Creek where the action picks up again.

Directions: Kermits is found below the I-70 90° bend bridging the river, roadside to Hwy 6 at mm 257.5 and the river.

THE ROADSIDE WHITEWATER OF CLEAR CREEK MANAGES TO IMPRESS EVEN THE MOST HARSH OF WHITEWATER CRITICS WITH HUGE LOOPS, FUN BOOFS, AND BIGGER WATER ROLLER COASTER RIDES.

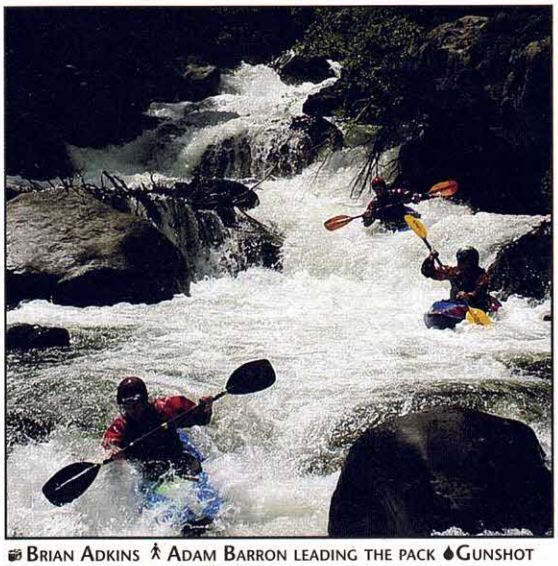
@KM 🚶 CLAY WRIGHT 💧LOOKING FOR THE AERIAL COMBO, LAWSON HOLE

West Fork Clear Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	200	250	300	400
Character	super mank	less abusive	ideal	could hurt
Class	V-	V	V	V+
Quality	★	★★★	★★★★	★★★
Gradient	370 fpm action			
Remoteness	roadside, with some small cliffs			
Hitchability	okay			
Length	2 miles			
Season	May, June			
Gauge	West Fork near Empire			
Put-in	flat meadow with willows, above Coors Falls			
Take-out	second bridge			

Recently enterprising boaters took it upon themselves to clean and maintain what once was a novelty falls drop and turn it into a legitimate run. A great amount of wood consistently needs to be removed, so check with locals for the latest beta. This is a short and fast, shallow and steep creek run and is an easy Denver area afterwork V deal once you know the lines. The creek is close to the road, but beware—almost every significant drop is set strategically where the creek veers furthest from the road.

At the foot of Berthoud Pass, in a flat willowy meadow area, you put in directly above Coors Falls. Leisurely float around a couple of meandering bends and stroke your nerves. You're going to need them later on. For now, catch an eddy on the right, 50 yards above the first very obvious horizon line. Coors Falls is the tallest and by far easiest drop on the run. Line up and do what you do off of this ten-footer. A couple of moves later and you are on your way into some fast and very shallow read-and-run creeking. The gradient flattens for a short spell and there may be wood in here as there are numerous avalanche paths river right.



Brian Adkins ⛹ Adam Barron leading the pack ♦Gunshot

As the gradient begins to return, eddy out to scout the toughest section of the run, the Double Z Gorge. Both of the Z gorges make hard right and then hard left bends. They come in quick succession of one another, but at lower flows there is one good eddy between them.

Not far beyond the Z Gorge action you come to the Why-Don't-We-Do-It-in-the-Road rapid. Do-It-In-The-Road is the only rapid that can be easily seen from Hwy 40. While running the shuttle, we passed the pullout above this rapid, and what we saw can only be described as a supreme example of exhibitionism at it's finest. White ass in the air, pants around the ankles, beautiful blonde on the bed, and truck gate down. We knew this was going to be one good run.

Run Do-It-in-the-Road center and the run-out on the left. More fast and shallow boating takes you to Gunshot (named for the gun shots heard during a fall wood cleansing mission). This is a steep and tricky rapid that requires a good scout and a quick flip of the wrist at the end. The last significant rapid is Elbow Crunch. Take the boof at the top just a bit further right than you might imagine and your left elbow will thank you later. Take out at the bridge, directly after a runnable dam.

Directions

Take Hwy 40 north from I-70 through Empire to the Marietta restaurant. Turn left onto the dirt road paralleling the highway just beyond the restaurant. Take out at the second bridge over the river. The put-in is 2.2 miles towards Berthoud Pass on Hwy 40 from the Marietta. Look for a flat willowy meadow area about a ¼-mile before a forest service CG.

A FANTASTIC CREEK RUN OFF OF I-70 WITH MANKY AND STEEP BOULDER GARDEN RAPIDS TO ROUTE DOWN AT FULL SPEED WITH THE FRONT RANGE POSSE.

REED KOENEKE JAKE SAKSON WEST FORK TOUGH GUY

Silverplume & Woods Creek

CFS	120<min<300<NR
Class	V+
Quality	★
Gradient	600 max, 390 avg
Length	1 mile
Season	before & after peak
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Silverplume
Take-out	Georgetown

Silverplume

Starting at Loveland and running to Silverplume is the more sane option here. But, it isn't that quality. Just micro-creeking in a wood infested, nearly eddy-less stream with tight turns that up the difficulty to class IV. The stuff right above Silverplume is more quality with less scouting work, since it is pretty much entirely roadside to I-70 and the more convenient frontage road. Have fun with an upper upper Clear Creek adventure.

The signature mank cascades are from Silverplume to Georgetown, and are novelty paddling at its finest. If driving WB, use the Silverplume Exit 226 to U-turn onto the EB lanes, and pullover immediately on the I-70 shoulder. This is the scout and launch point for the run below, which skips the tunnels under I-70. I've only run this section twice, the first time with the optimal flow of wet rocks. I cracked a paddle, pinned randomly, and basically bounced my way down the entire thing. It was fun, jarring, and gear abusive. The second time I put on when the water was brown. I made it through the first set of ledges, and was on my way to catching the first eddy of the day when a rock caught my nose, spun me sideways, and dropped me to the upstream side where I folded my boat. It was over after about 60' of vert in 45 seconds. From the historic railroad site down the action is more manageable, more channelized, and is roadside via the route to the historic railroad depot.

Directions: Put in along I-70. Although I'm not sure of the legality of this, just show the officer what you are about to run, and he should just pass you off as a lunatic that shouldn't be dealt with. Take out at the grocery store parking lot in town.

Woods Creek

This is a crazy little steep creek at the very bottom of Berthoud Pass, best run in conjunction with the West Fork Clear Creek. The main attraction of this run is the first one-hundred yards that drop a good 300 feet of vertical. Put in on a small reservoir for the Henderson Mine, then slide over a sluice dropping 200' vertical down the side of the impoundment that dumps directly into a steep Class V cascade. At the bottom of the cascade, hike back up and do it again a few times!

Once you've had your fill, continue downstream for a ¼-mile of silly and steep Class V-. It's highly recommended to check for new wood before committing. Once you reach the confluence with the West Fork, take out immediately on river left upstream of a river-wide strainer. Hike straight up and out of the gorge and through the woods to the hairpin turn on Hwy 40.

A word of caution: Since the dam and the area around the creek is owned by the Henderson Mine, there has been some debate over what their reaction is going to be when they find out that it is being kayaked. Currently there isn't anything blocking a descent, and the no trespassing signs are absent, even though it is obviously private. Please be stealth at the top of the dam, and if you see mine personnel hanging out or driving around don't run the sluice.

CFS	200<min<400<high
Class	V- (V)
Quality	★★
Gradient	430 fpm
Length	.5 mile
Season	May, June
Gauge	West Fork nr Empire
Riv Access	Hwy 40 hairpin turn

Directions: From I-70 take the Berthoud Pass exit and drive west on Hwy 40 to the first hair-pin turn. Take a left on the dirt road and drive a ¼-mile. Take another left onto a smaller dirt road, and park 100 yards down. Use this as the staging area.

-Brian Adkins

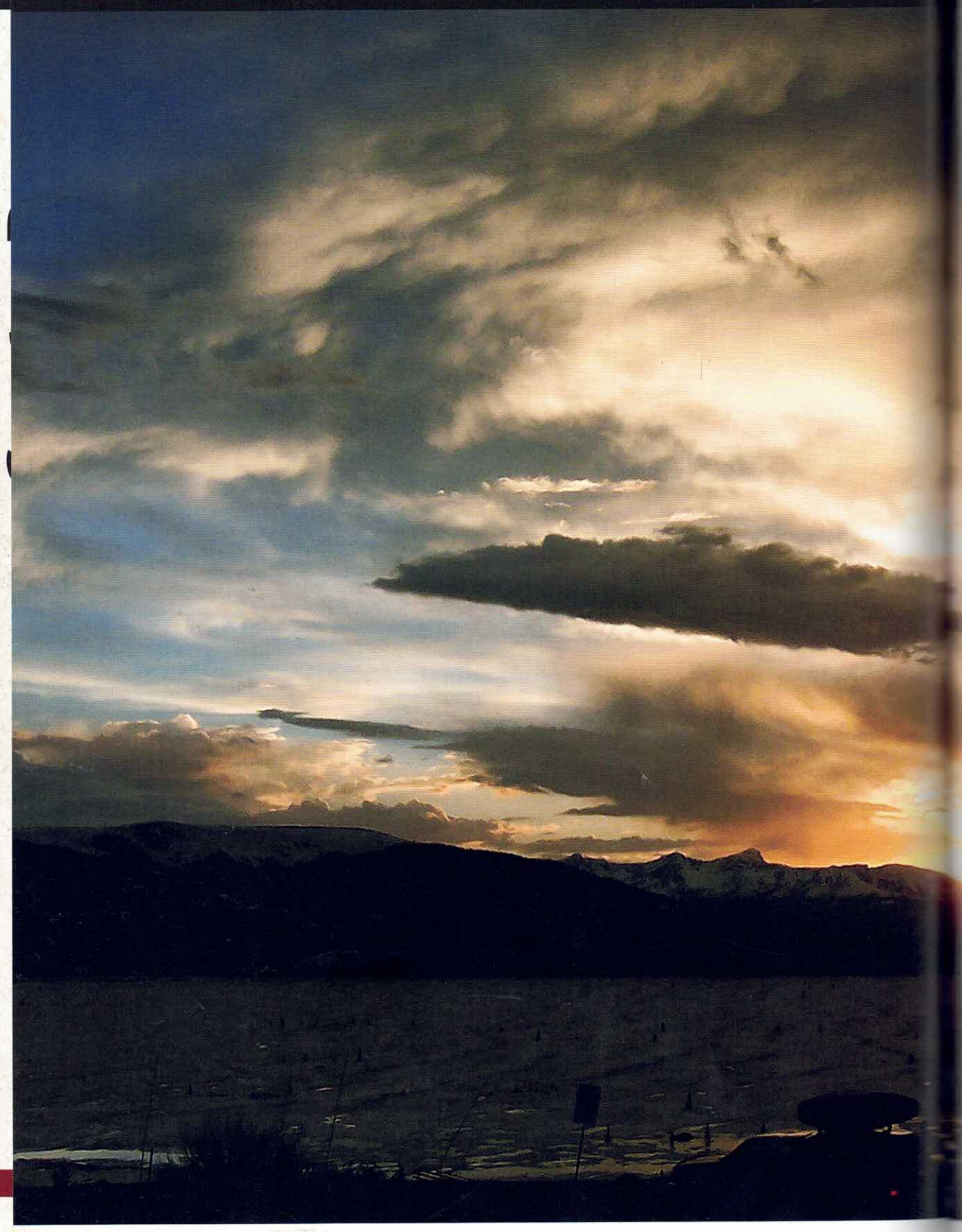
KEN "HOBIE" HOEVE JOE BLAIR SILVERPLUME, JUST BELOW I-70

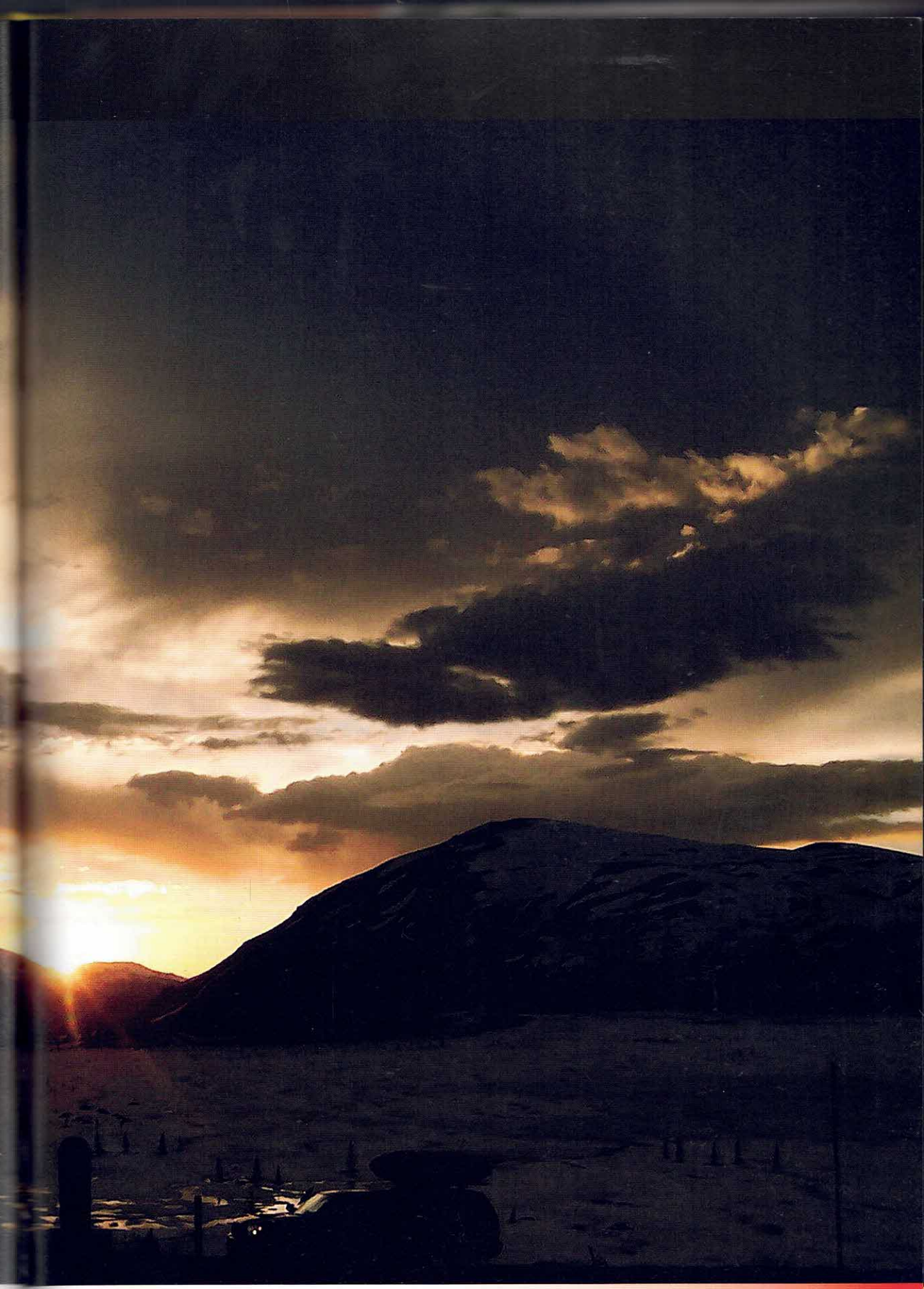
KM LYLE PHETTEPLACE THE CHUNKY PUT-IN DROP

The headwaters mank of the Clear Creek valley. Bring the duct tape, elbow pads, and full face helmet.

Lyle Phetteplace • Silverplume to Georgetown, the lower half

Headwaters of the Colorado





Ben Copithorn ♦ Fremont Pass

Tenmile Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	450	600	800	1000
Character	cold & chill	bouncy	top gets juice	culverts suck
Upper Class	IV+	V-	V	V
Mid Dwn Class	III	IV-	IV-	IV
Quality	★	★★	★★★	★★★
Gradient	Upper 200 fpm, Middle Down 100 fpm			
Remoteness	interstate on left, bike path on right			
Hitchability	okay for middle and top			
Length	4.2 miles			
Season	May, June, July			
Gauge	Tenmile Creek below North Tenmile			
Put-in	I-70 legal pull-off			
Take-out	Dillon Reservoir			

Ten Mile Creek is odd in many ways. Located alongside I-70 from Copper Mountain Resort to Frisco, the whitewater here bounces along a continuous little streambed, which starts out steep, and gradually mellows over the entire 4.2 mile run. It's a bigger river than expected given the geology of the area, which is very rocky and steep. The water is cold as it drips off the snow-covered banks. It would run nicely from top-to-bottom if it weren't for one ugly factor, a metal culvert at the Officers Gulch exit area that is very scary at high flows and likely necessitates a portage or alternate put-in, depending on your skill level. Thus, the run is commonly divided here between the upper and middle sections. A lower section also exists for less-experienced paddlers.

Upper

The upper is money when it is big. While your winter Summit county friends are crying as their white drips away, you're laughing as 1000 cfs comes cranking down all at once. The top mile cranks at levels of 600 plus, and once things get over a G, the holes pick up a notch. It's basically over in less than five minutes at this level and it is intense all the way to the must-make eddy immediately above the sketchy culvert. This is why you pre-scouted your take-out eddy prior to ever deciding to run the top. If doubt over making this move is present, then put in below. This can be a fantastic class V pit-stop during spring peak in the high country.

Middle Down

The middle is an obvious difficulty notch easier than the upper. Put in behind the culverts (or seal launch off of them if you want), and enjoy the class IV whitewater that persists below. Occasional eddies give the creek some character, and at low flow this can be a great eddy-catching follow-the-leader run. The play is never that great here, mostly because it is shallow, but it isn't bad for an afternoon break between weekends on the Ark. If carnage happens, the bike path offers escape (and scouting) on river right.

Towards the end of this section things mellow, but a lower run through the town of Frisco exists for novices. For the advanced paddler it will just be a paddle out, although the best play will be here at high flows.

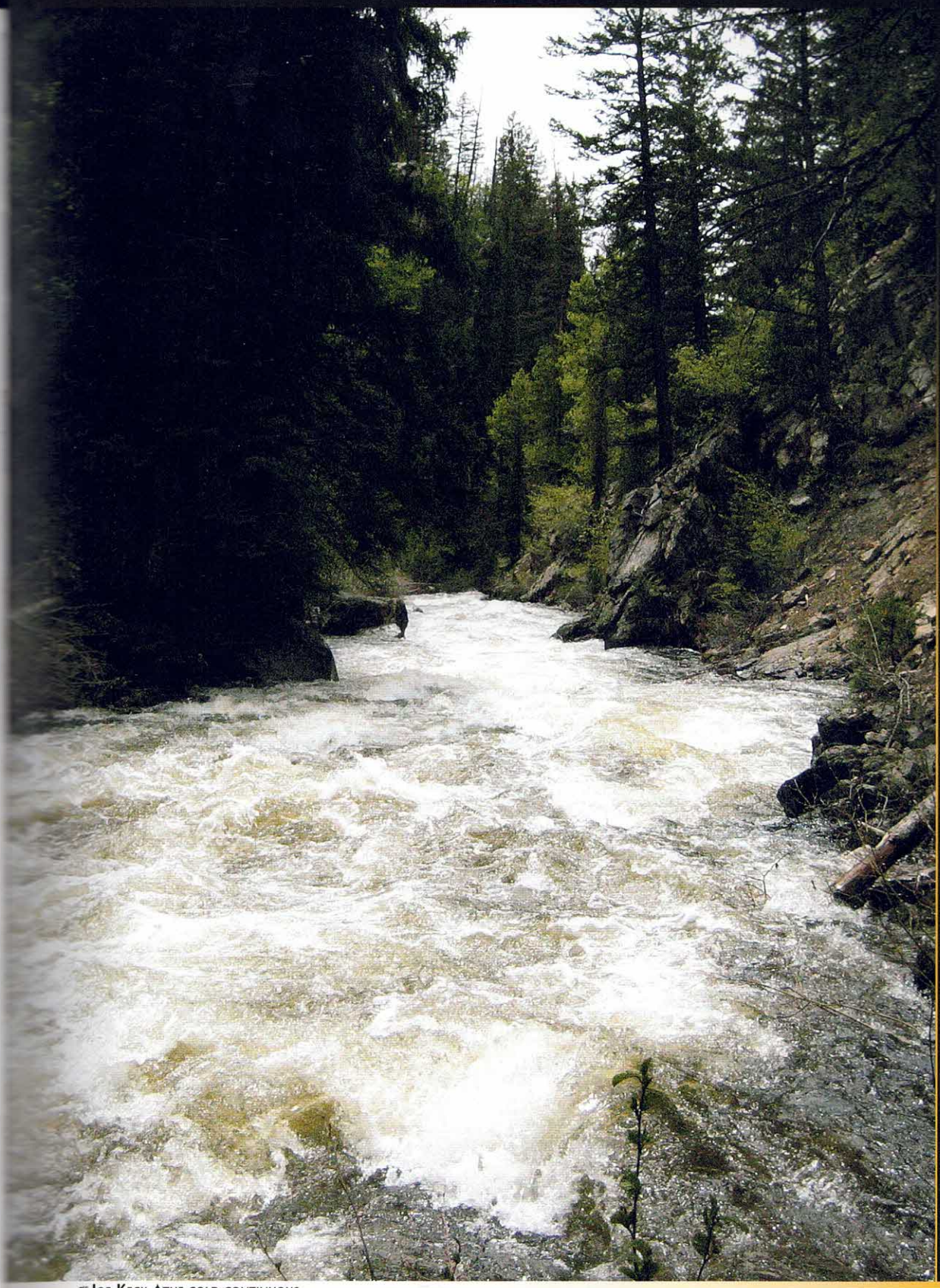
Afternoon Adventure (no beta box)

If things are peaking, and you're stuck in Summit with only a few hours of paddling freedom, then it may be worthy to check out the upper-upper Ten Mile. Less water exists in this stretch paralleling Hwy 91, where a put-in exists at the first and only road bridge, just below the culverts. A pre-scout for wood will be mandatory for the mostly III+ whitewater. The water will be ice cold, but ignore the ice-cream headache and run it high to up the excitement levels to IV+.

Directions

Exit 201 or 203 and make your way to the Hwy 9 and Main St intersection. Take Main St to the marina at Dillon Reservoir. For the beginner put-in, or the class III avoidance take-out, use exit 201, and park at the river left pullout immediately next to the off ramp. Scout the culverts and the portage eddy or put in for *Middle Down at Officers Gulch, exit 198. An upper put-in can be found off of the Copper Mountain exit,* down by the gas station. I prefer to use the paved pull off on westbound I-70, where you can dodge semis while running across with your boat. You know its going to be intense when semi-trucks and weekend warriors are driving by at 65 mph a mere 15 feet away from the put-in eddy.

THE MOST POPULAR AFTER-WORK RUN FOR SUMMIT COUNTY. EVERYTHING FROM CLASS III TO V CAN BE FOUND ON THIS SHORT STRETCH OF SWIFT AND COLD WHITEWATER.



JOE KECK ♦THE COLD CONTINUOUS

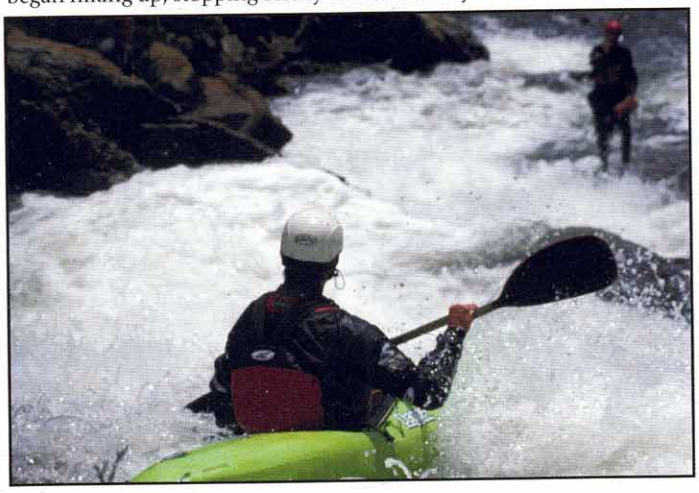
White Stripe & Breck Town

The White Stripe

CFS	55<min<100<med
Class	V+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	405 fpm
Length	1/3 mile
Season	May, June, July
Gauge	visual?
Riv Access	Magnolia Mine

The Upper Middle Fork of the South Platte flows into Montgomery Reservoir near the top of Hoosier Pass. Paddlers driving along Hwy 9 on the south side of Hoosier catch a glimpse of the white stripe careening down the ridge, and curiosity has lured a handful of park-and-huckers to this V+ cascading set of slightly manky slides and verts. The excitement induced from a successful descent may match the names of the rapids, which were inspired by a stripper. Shane Robinson found this in the off-season one day, and returned with a crew the next spring when it was raging at 55cfs (it can be run much higher).

While scouting Lap Dance, the first triple-set of vert-slide-slide that drops over 40' total, serious contemplation was going into the anticipated results of the first attempt. Questions about the depth of the first pool, and about the possible impact at the base of the first slide were creating debate among the team. Without further hesitation, Charlie Beavers began hiking up, stopping briefly to turn and say to the others, "Ya ain't gonna die. Worst thing that will happen will be a skateboarding injury."



Despite a very quick roll by Shane, and a piton in the first pool by Charlie, the drop lived up to its name—over quickly and kind of fun. Below this set are a 4'-ledge and a gauge to paddle through, known as Double Anal for Todd Gillman's back-to-back bad lines. The last series is sensually named Love You Long Time for the relatively long length of the drop. Take out above the crappy Dirty Sanchez cascade, which may be underwater if the reservoir is full, and NR if it isn't full.

Directions: Take Hwy 9 to the south side of Hoosier Pass. Turn onto FR 408, which leads around the edge of Montgomery Reservoir to the Magnolia Mine. Park here, scout, hike and huck.

Blue River Source (no beta box)

The source of the Blue from Goose Tarn through town needs a huge year to run (it requires more water than the Breck Park). Most of the water is diverted through a tunnel into Montgomery Reservoir, which adds to the problem of inadequate flow. When it is running, start at the top of a large 100' plus spillway that I have run. It's relatively wide making it scrapey and slow, but it would be better with more water.

The stuff below the spillway is creeky class III in one or two spots, but it is very rare to find with enough water to run. The creek through town is mostly artificial but has good micro-creeking possibilities. There is one culvert under the road that has about a five-foot drop to a small stair step below. The rest is clean class III. Look for a minimum of 200 cfs prior to putting on, conveniently the same recommended minimum for the Breck Park at the take-out.

Directions: Hwy 9 south of Breckenridge leads to Goose Tarn, and the spillway.

-Mike Hagadorn

Breckenridge Park

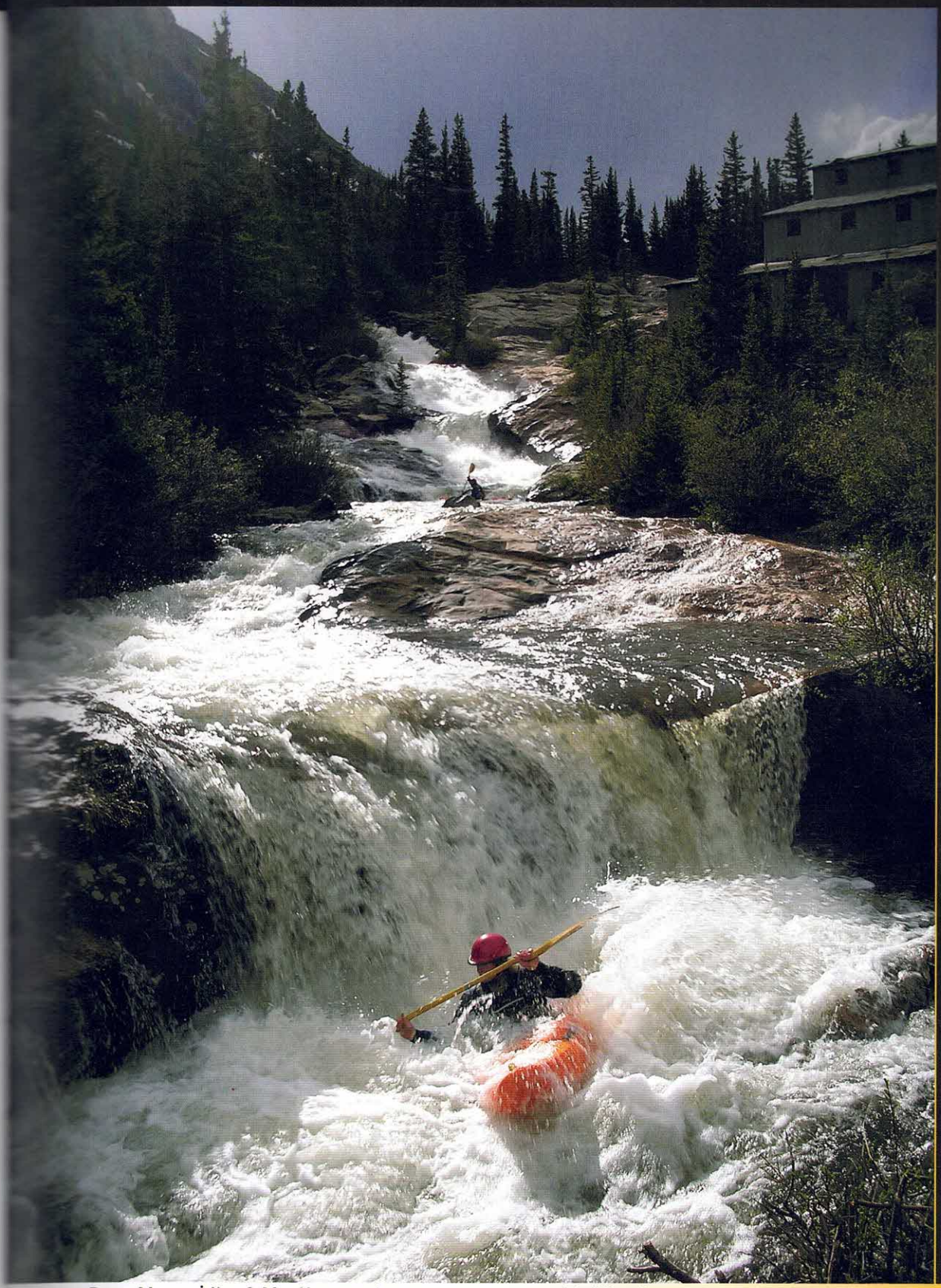
CFS	see text or 200<min
Class	II+
Eddy	tons
Quality	★★
Season	peak
Gauge	Blue @ Blue River
Riv Access	Breckenridge Town

This was a beautiful idea that failed horribly, and a valuable lesson was learned. Don't build whitewater parks at an elevation that is too high to collect enough water to ever run. The result is more beneficial as pretty stream side landscaping than for the freestyle features. But, supposedly, if there is 50 cfs (rare) then you can sit in an eddy, and at 90 cfs (super rare) you might be able to throw an end. The park was built for a minimum of 200 cfs, so start holding your breath now...

Directions: Why? I already told you that it's not running.

📷 Ned Stitt 🚶 Shane Robinson 💧The White Stripe

PADDLERS TRAVELING HWY 9 CATCH A GLIMPSE OF The White Stripe, AND CURIOSITY HAS LURED IN A HANDFUL OF PARK-AND-HUCKERS TO THIS V+ CASCADING SET OF MANKY SLIDES AND VERTS.



DORAN MGWIRE KYLE & MIKE HAGADORN THE BROTHERS BLUE ANGELING THE WHITE STRIPE

Keystone Lifty & Ski Patroller Special

The Snake River is a small creek that flows into Dillon Reservoir, on the Keystone Resort side of the lake. Rather than having three different Snake's in this book, we've decided to officially change the name of this creek. From now on, it's called the Keystone Lifty & Ski Patroller Special. This creek has two good sections of whitewater—a lower class III section with some play, and the upper, starting near the old mining town of Montezuma.

The real gem of this river is the upper, with a swift class IV section that starts where the KLSPS flows under the Montezuma Road, about four-miles upstream of Hwy 6. There are four good rapids on this section, the first of which is Pillow Case, a long boulder-garden with a bony exit. Next is Log Jammin', followed quickly by the only true vert of the run. The last one is roadside. There are a few pieces of wood in and around

CFS	150<min<200<good
Class	IV
Quality	★★★
Gradient	130 fpm
Length	2.5 miles
Season	peak of the summit county peak
Gauge	KLSPS @ Montezuma
Riv Access	see text

the KLSPSB, and at least one portage over a large tree.

The lower is mellow class III with a few small surf-spots, the best of which is inside the river left tunnel under Hwy 6. It's cool. Two river wide logs live on this run, the first of which can be snuck on the far left. The entire run has more character than Ten Mile Creek by a long shot. If you are passing through Summit County, it is worth an afternoon creek session.

Directions: Take out at the lake off of Swan Mt. Rd for the lower. Put in behind the Keystone Lodge, found near the Texaco intersection. For the upper, drive east on Hwy 6 past Keystone Ski Resort, and turn right onto Montezuma Rd. Drive 1.5 miles to the dirt pullout. Another 2.5 up the road is a bridge and preferred put-in.

-Mike Hagadorn

Upper Blue

This is a short stretch that offers the only exciting whitewater between Summit County, and Green Mountain Reservoir downstream. Surrounded by a gravel riverbed that offers better fishing opportunities than paddling for most of its course, the crux canyon of the Blue River, which contains short-lived III+ whitewater starts near the Blue River Campground. Less experienced paddlers can stick to this scenic stretch at lower flows, where the scrapey main flow offers little in the way of intense whitewater, and a desire for a hint of class II can be fulfilled here with optional river access points both up and downstream, many of which are due to a plethora of fishing activity. Flows above 1000 cfs up the difficulty to IV-, creating minimal play for more advanced paddlers.

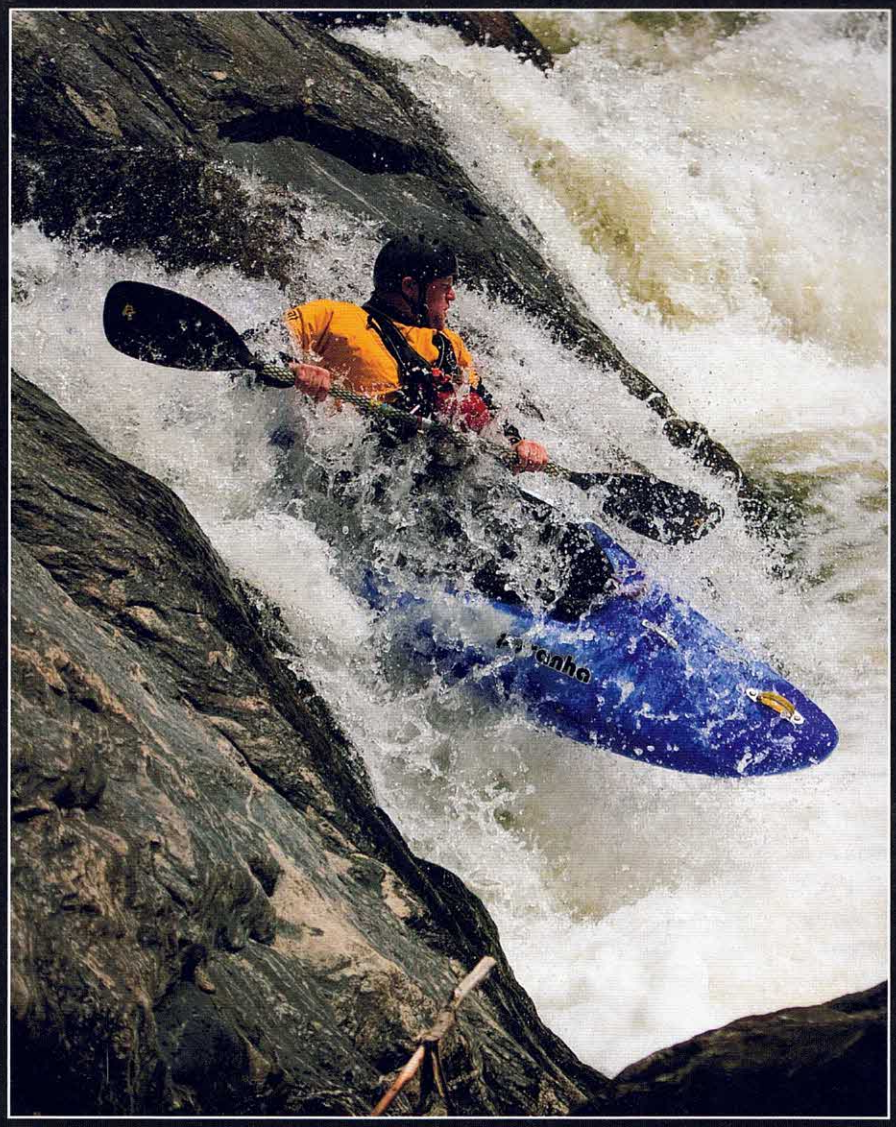
Dillon Reservoir controls the flows on this stretch, and the river here seems to run less as more water is needed to keep the Front Range hydrated. An energetic Kara Lamb, from the Bureau of Reclamation, keeps mountainbuzz members well informed of scheduled releases and non-releases alike for this run, the Green Mtn stretch below, and various other front range rivers including gnarly runs like Bailey and the Big T.

Directions: Blue River CG on Hwy 9 is the put-in to maximize the

CFS	400<min<600<better 1g<best
Class	III+<600<IV-
Quality	★★
Gradient	35 fpm
Length	3 miles
Season	dam, April-July
Gauge	Blue River below Dillon
Put-in	Blue River CG
Take-out	Columbine Landing

whitewater, 8 miles downstream from Silverthorne. The Columbine Landing Pullout is downstream, where a bridge spans the river, and FR 2400 ducks off to the right.

Adam Jess Mike Hagadorn the upper KLSPS



"If the voice of the brook was not the first song of celebration, it must have been at least an obbligato for that event."

-Hal Borland

Tye Eyden Mike Pagel

Green Mountain Canyon

This section of the Blue River is a scenic beginner stretch that starts at the base of the dam that holds back the water of Green Mountain Reservoir, preventing it from gushing downstream as it naturally would in a typical spring. High flows are rarely present here as they were before the dam. The artificial season benefits paddlers at times, with a longer Green Mtn and Gore season, as a more consistent water level is sent to the arid desert downstream.

The rapids here are simple and short boulder gardens for the most part. A few lurking features keep the interest of novice paddlers. The scenery is a solid notch above the rest of the Blue River, making this a desirable paddling daytrip.

Directions: From Summit County, take Hwy 9 north, and turn left onto the Dam Access Road (30 Rd) at the north end of the reservoir. Park on the far side of the dam, where a short downhill hike leads to the put-in. From the Dam Access Road, continue north on Hwy 9 for 2.5 miles, and turn left onto Spring Creek Rd (30 Rd). Take out river left (landowner wishes) at the bridge in one mile.

CFS	300<min<1000<best
Class	II<800<II+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	50 fpm
Length	3.8 miles
Season	April to Sept (Dam)
Gauge	Blue blw Grn Mtn Res
Put-in	Dam Access Road
Take-out	Spring Creek Road

Byers Canyon

Between Hot Sulpher Springs and Kremmling, the Colorado River is forced through a short canyon forming constricted whitewater that tumbles beneath Hwy 40. Due to heavy west-to-east-slope water transfers upstream of Byers, this section rarely has flows worthy of making a descent. In a big year, when there is plenty of water during peak run-off, this is a romping wave filled chute of pleasure. Most of the class III and IV action is located within the two miles below Hot Sulpher Springs, and really picks up when you reach the crux, a sticky river-wide ledge that can be nasty at low flow. This one is a fun and logistically easy run that rarely flows, so catch it if you can.

Directions: Put in at the bridge on the downstream end of Hot Sulpher Springs. Take out three miles down Hwy 40 at the next bridge.

CFS	400<optimal<2000
Class	IV<1500<V-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	40 fpm
Length	2.6 miles
Season	May, June (peak)
Gauge	CO Riv @ Windy Gap
Put-in	near Hot Sulfer Springs
Take-out	Hwy 40 bridge

Fraser Canyon

This is another beautiful canyon that usually lacks flows worthy of making the journey due to water thirsty Front Range inhabitants. However, big snow years can generate awesome and distinct class III and IV rapids in a remote canyon back-dropped by the jagged Indian Peaks. Intermediate boaters at high water may want to scout a few drops at the crux of the run near the halfway point, where the whitewater becomes more continuous and long swims have occurred. A fun canyon to paddle, but you will need to be a local or have a streak of good fortune and lucky timing to catch quality flows. Combining this run with the Byers Canyon stretch and an overnight stay at the Hot Sulpher Springs lodge would provide a great class IV high-water vacation weekend.

Directions: Put in on Crooked Creek just north of Tabernash on Hwy 40. This small creek heads down to the Fraser River quickly, but watch out for a couple of the railroad culverts near the confluence. The take-out is on Hwy 40 at the next bridge crossing just south of Granby.

CFS	400<optimal<1000
Class	III+<1000<IV
Quality	★★★
Gradient	35 fpm
Length	9.4 miles
Season	May, June (peak)
Gauge	Fraser Riv nr Tabernash
Put-in	Crooked Creek
Take-out	Hwy 40 bridge

Chris Morrison ♦Green Mtn section, Blue River

SUBARU the official car of Dagger
Dagger
Dagger

Gore Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	375	750	1300	2400
Character	tech meat Gore	Tunnel Falls is sticky	Ice Cream	Goar
Class	IV (V-, V)	IV+ (V, V- x2)	V- (V x3)	V+
Quality	★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	115 fpm crux, with a very flat paddle in			
Remoteness	high, but escapable along the bank			
Hitchability	poor, but fair on high boater traffic days			
Length	9.2 miles			
Season	nearly year round, when free of ice			
Gauge	Colorado River near Kremmling			
Put-in	BLM Launch Site, off of Hwy 9 near Kremmling			
Take-out	Pumphouse			

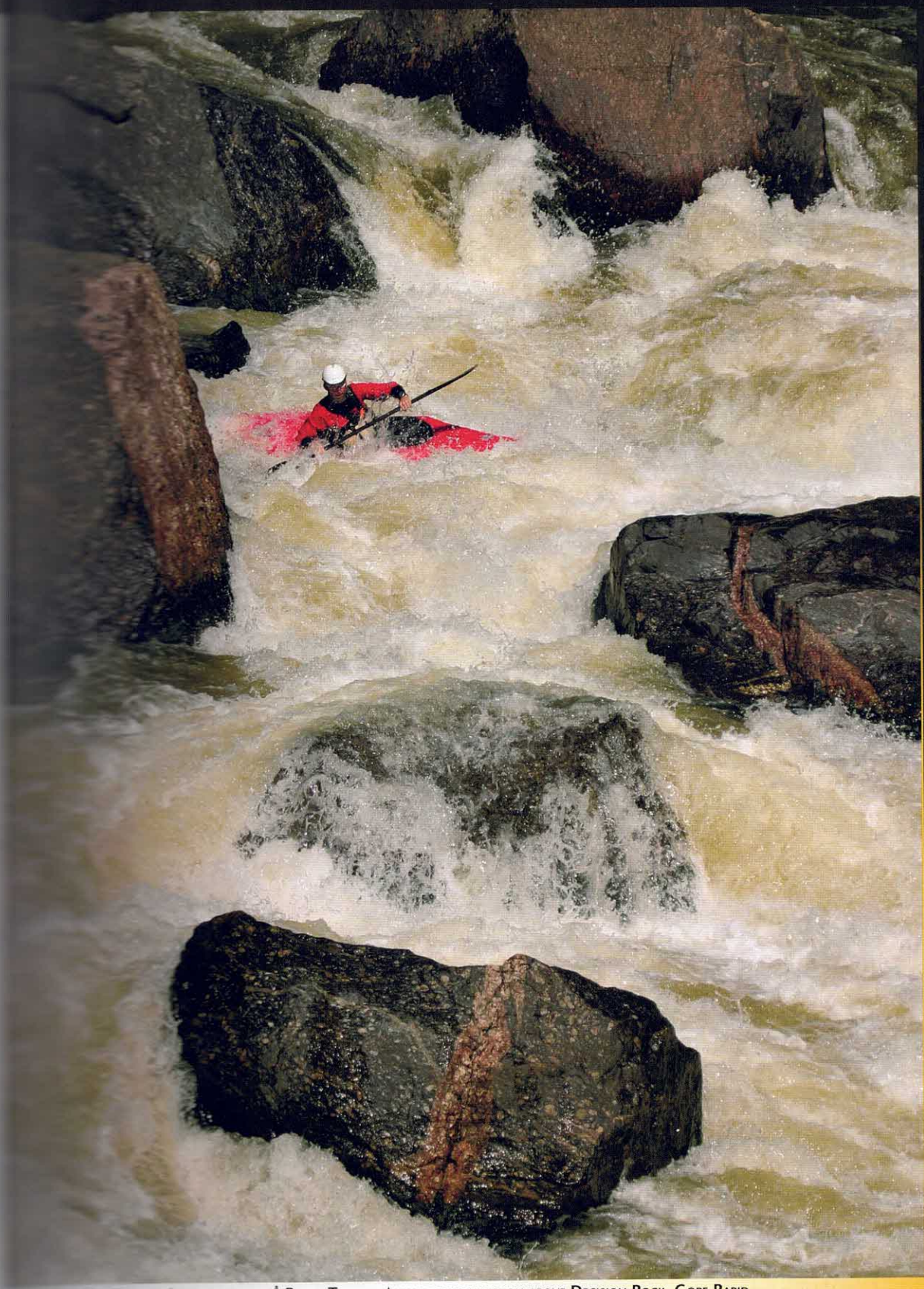
The steepest and most difficult section of the Colorado River cuts a rugged canyon through a swath of BLM land south of Kremmling. Gore Canyon, to many in our region, is the definition of a class V run. Conversely, conventional wisdom among the Colorado creek boating community says that "any section regularly commercially rafted should be downgraded to class IV." So which is it? The answer lies somewhere in-between.

From the dusty otter slide at the put-in, a scenic 45 minute float ensues through a bird watchers paradise. At the mouth of the canyon the whitewater finally appears in the form of wide class III waves and holes.

The significant rapids begin soon after with Applesauce and continue in a pool drop fashion through-out. Gore rapid is next and runs head long into the next two significant rapids, Scissors and Pyrite. Scout right. This constitutes the most sustained whitewater of the run and is a bad place to swim. Numerous lines exist with varying difficulty. How fast do you want to lose your gradient and how much of Ginger Hole do you want to bite off? The answer to these questions will determine your line.

Many fun rapids and a few sticky holes deliver you to Tunnel Falls, located at the base of the second railroad tunnel. Scout left. Tunnel has multiple lines as well, but most of them aim to skirt the meat of this powerful ledge in one form or another. Toilet Bowl is just downstream of Tunnel and is probably the largest hydraulic of the run. It is commonly snuck on the extreme left. Boof it in the

TYE EYDEN 🚶 POUDRE POSSE B-TEAM 💧RAFTINGS, SERIOUS WHITEWATER!



 BRENT TOEPPER MAKING THE DECISION ABOVE DECISION ROCK, GORE RAPID

long boat! The finale is Kirshbaums, an extended class IV+ romp as the canyon opens.

Gore is a classic *easy* class V run. However, most first timers are scared, or at least they should be. Floating through Gore with your feet dangling below you looks unpleasant to say the least (especially if you like your shins the color they are). However, there are really only a handful of class V moves at moderate water levels, and most can be snuck with a class IV+ line. Combined with a paddle-and-pray attitude at Tunnel, many new to class V river rats will be able to negotiate the canyon. These reasons, with an extended season due to heavy plumbing, make this a popular run. And then there's the race.

The Gore Race has played host to the National Rafting Championship multiple times and is generally regarded as an official Colorado boater's holiday weekend. You're never sure what you're going to get in terms of the race itself, but the one thing you can count on is the party. Expect grease bombs, keg stands and maybe even some puppetry of the penis. Be forewarned. This is a great time to celebrate the season and for the uninitiated to make a descent, with safety pre-set at nearly every major drop during the race.

Directions

To get to this run take Hwy 9 south from Kremmling or north from Silverthorne. About 2.5 miles south of Kremmling turn west onto dirt Rd 1 (Trough Road). To get to the put-in turn right (north) onto a gated road just before crossing over the Blue River and drive about 1.5 miles to the obvious launch spot, complete with a whitewater-sticker-covered latrine. To get to the take-out go back out to Rd 1 and continue west about 10 miles to the Pumphouse campground sign and turn right. Follow this road down to the river and the large boat-ramp. This is a pay to use area, even for day use, so make sure to get your permit at the campground entrance. If coming from the west the Pumphouse turn is approximately 15 miles from State Bridge on Rd 1.

Tye Eyden Kevin Hammond racing in the Dancer

Brook Aitken anonymous getting spit out, Tunnel Falls

Pumphouse

This is a scenic family and fishing type run that is very popular, and happens to share its put-in with the Gore Canyon take-out. This is often great, as it allows greater potential for hitching a shuttle on Gore, and affords ample camping options at the put-in for the parents and kids to arrive the night before launching. I have, however, met the poor fellow who happened to show up on a Saturday evening in August, with wife and kid in tow, only to ask the question, "Is there some kind of event going on or something?"

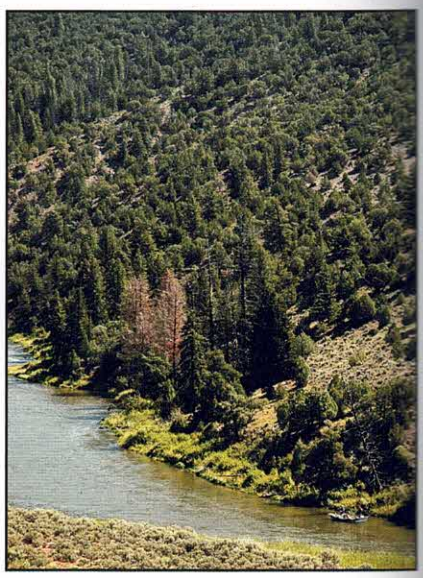
The run can be broken apart in a number of ways, but the most popular is to launch from Pumphouse Recreation site and enjoy the Upper Gorge, which is signaled by a train tunnel on river right. Mellow sets of class III waves lead to Eye of the Needle, where a rock in the center must be negotiated—the cause of two holes at over 4000. This is the crux of the Upper, so you can relax after this as things calm to class II. Watch for the hot springs on river left, as well as the Radium Recreation Site for another river access point.

Red Gorge is next, and is much longer and typically juicier than the Upper, creating fairly consistent class III. A sign marks one of the tougher rapids, Yarmony, which has a large wave hole requiring a move from left to center. Take out at the Rancho Del Rio or Yarmony Bridge on CR 1.

Continuing to State Bridge is a short 3.9-mile stretch with some friendly wave trains. At low water leave it to the fisherman. It's roadside, and a fun addition to the rest at higher flow. Take-out directly at the bar with the back-woods concerts.

Directions: Multiple river access points along this entire stretch. From top to bottom, with multiple put-in and take-out options, they are: Pumphouse Recreation Area, then 1 Rd to the Radium Recreation site, or the better alternative at Rio Del Rancho or Yarmony Bridge. The town of State Bridge is next, at the intersection of 1 Rd, a noisy train, and the more civilized Hwy 131.

CFS	500<min<1000<best
Class	III-<1500<III+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	15 fpm
Length	13.9 or variable
Season	year round, no ice
Gauge	CO Riv nr Kremmling
Put-in	Pumphouse
Take-out	Yarmony Bridge



State Bridge to Burns

Multiple put-in and take-out options in here, and this is a surprisingly okay overnight section despite being somewhat roadside the entire way. The gravel built Colorado River Road is as quiet as the river here, and for whatever reason traffic is limited. The first common day stretch is from State Bridge to the Catamount Bridge, where a BLM take-out can be found.

The next five miles are the prettiest of this stretch though, and missing them would be a shame, since it's here that the road leaves the river, in a canyon where you probably won't see another river runner. Camp a mile or two from the bridge, just past some power lines on river right. Burns has the next take-outs, but the one next to the railroad bridge above the ominous Burns Hole is a little steep. In a raft, running the drop on either side will usually get you through, but right seems to be preferred.

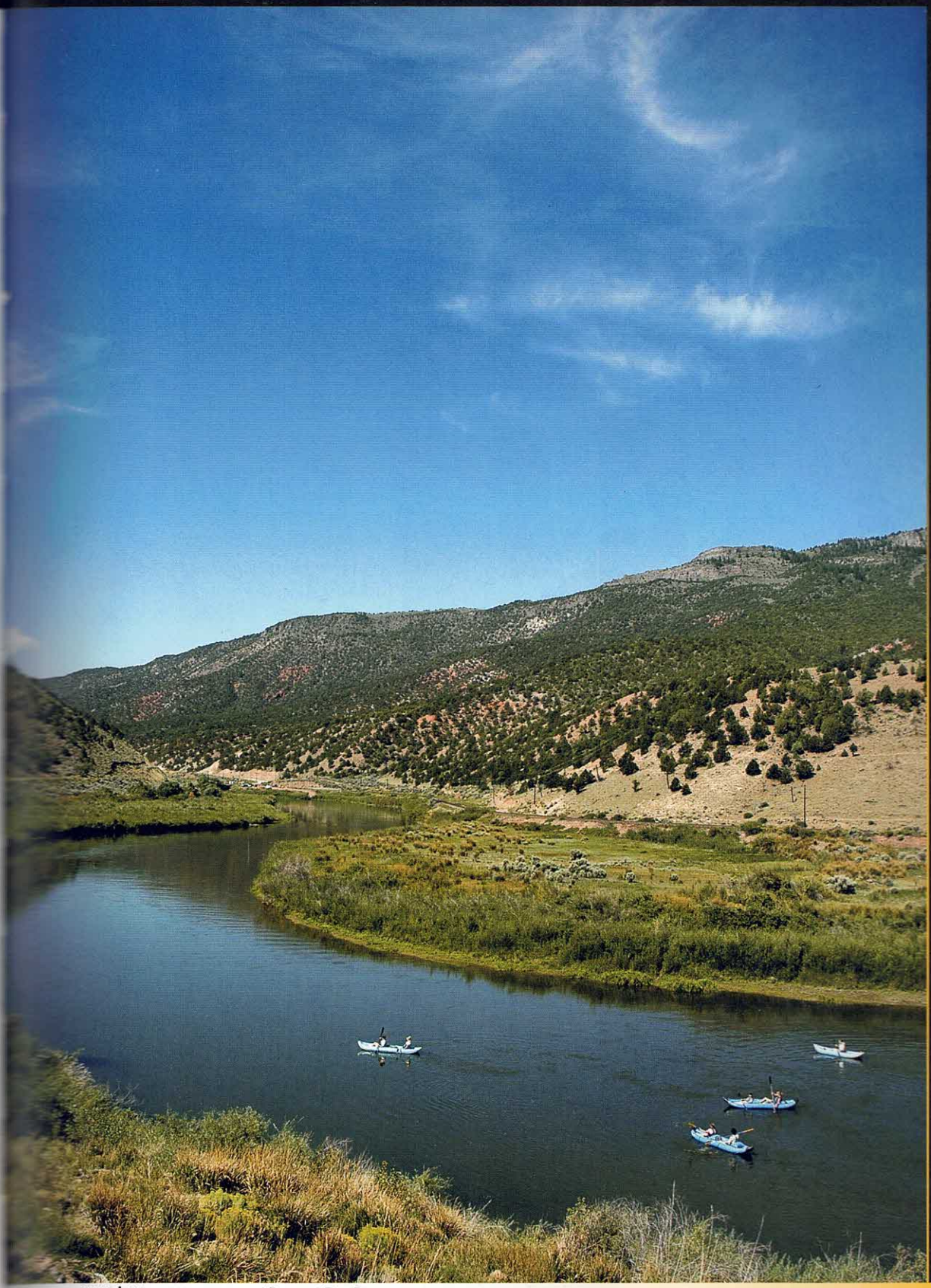
The 'Rodeo Hole' has been changing for the worst over the years to what is now an overly retentive pour-over that you can do huge wave wheels into—if you don't mind swimming occasionally to get out. The boat ramp below the drop is good, and requires a private fee. It's rumored that Glenda, the manager, will accept a 12-pack of Bud Light, if you are a non-commercial.

CFS	500<min<1000<best
Class	III (IV- @ Burns)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	15 fpm
Length	20.2 or variable
Season	year round, no ice
Gauge	CO Riv nr Kremmling
Put-in	State Bridge
Take-out	Burns

Directions: To set shuttle downstream of State Bridge, turn north onto Hwy 131, and then take a left on Rd 301 (Colorado River Rd) a few miles after passing McCoy. When the road crosses the river to the left, you've reached the Catamount Bridge access. Six miles further is the town of Burns.

KM FISHING BELOW YARMONY BRIDGE

The next five miles are the prettiest of this stretch, and missing them would be a shame, since it's here that the road leaves the river, in a canyon where you probably won't see another river runner.



KM IK recreationalists Rancho Del Rio float

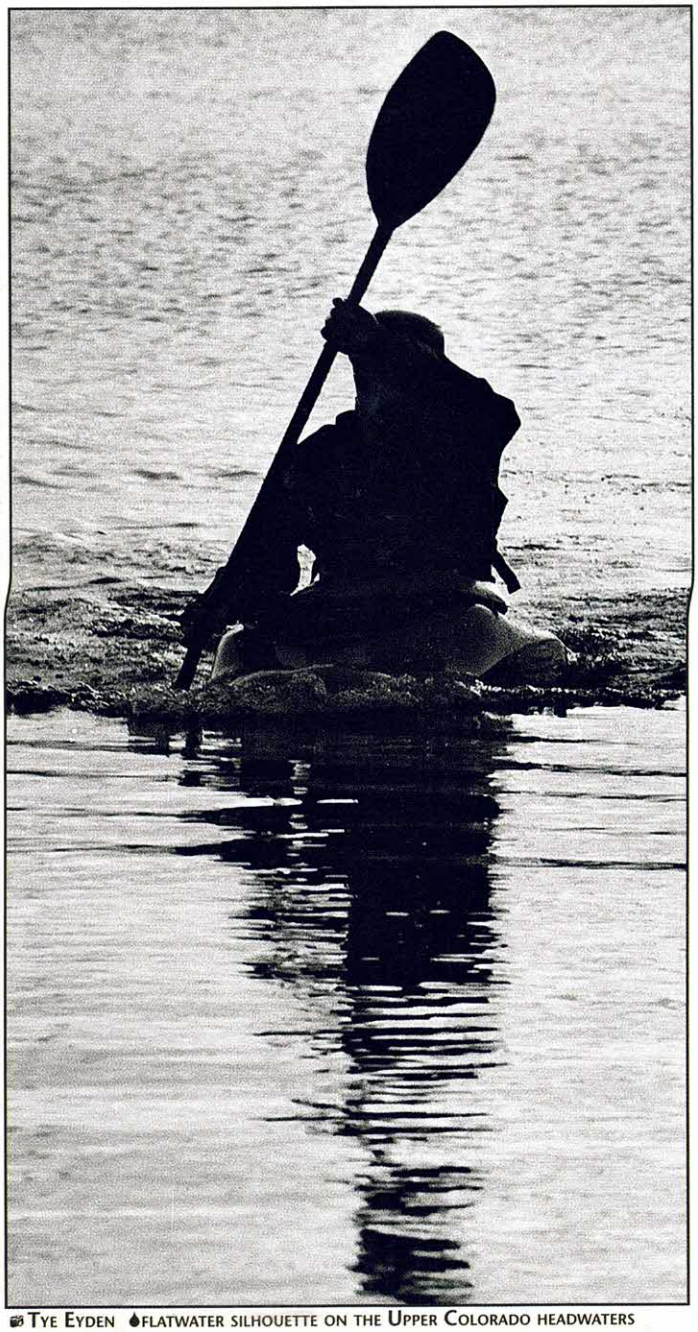
Burns to Sweetwater Creek (no beta box)

The first four-miles below Burns contain little whitewater, and end at the Pinball Recreation Area. Between Pinball Rec Area and the Sweetwater Creek river access is the Jack's Flats camp site—complete with a good eddy, shade trees, and hiking in the Bull Gulch wilderness area. Sweetwater Creek to Deep Creek remains calm for a winding 7.2 miles.

Directions: Take out at Deep Creek, shortly below the private Youth Camp at the mouth of Sweetwater, off of 301 Rd. Use Pinball Recreation Area for middle access, and Burns as the uppermost put-in.

Dotsero Section

The next 3.6 miles of fantastic beginner greenwater to Lyon's Gulch River Access is the upper half of a top-notch stretch. From Sweetwater to Dotsero are some of the best 7.5-miles of first-time-in-a-boat paddling. It's calm, but has a couple of class II rapids. The river swerves enough to create non-powerful eddies, and there's even a beginner surfing wave near the Deep Creek confluence. It's perfect for your first weekend roadtrip as a kayaker. There is good car-camping off of Coffee Pot Road that parallels Deep Creek, although getting crowded.



Tye Eyden ♦Flatwater silhouette on the Upper Colorado headwaters

The short 3.8 miles from Lyon's Gulch to Dotsero contain the most excitement, and it's easy to combine a run here with one of the Glenwood Springs area beginner runs of almost entirely different scenery.

Eddies Garage: Burns isn't the only park-and-play of this freestyle starved stretch. Eddie's Garage can be found near a few cliff walls, about five miles above Dotsero. It's a weird combination of a squirt and eddy spot—also known as a wave-hole that angles downstream. I think Guska used to throw big loops here, but I could be mistaken. *Don't drive out of your way for it.*

Directions: Burns to Dotsero is 18.9 road miles along 301 Rd, with some sort of river access every three-to-seven miles. The most popular river access points from top to bottom are Pinball Recreation Area, Deep Creek, Lyon's Gulch, and Dotsero Exit off of I-70. A river left take-out next to the trestle bridge has ample parking, but the security of leaving a vehicle unattended overnight is questionable.

CFS	500<min<1200 best
Class	I (IIs)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	really flat
Length	7.5 miles, variable
Season	year round, no ice
Gauge	CO Riv nr Dotsero
Put-in	Deep Creek
Take-out	Dotsero

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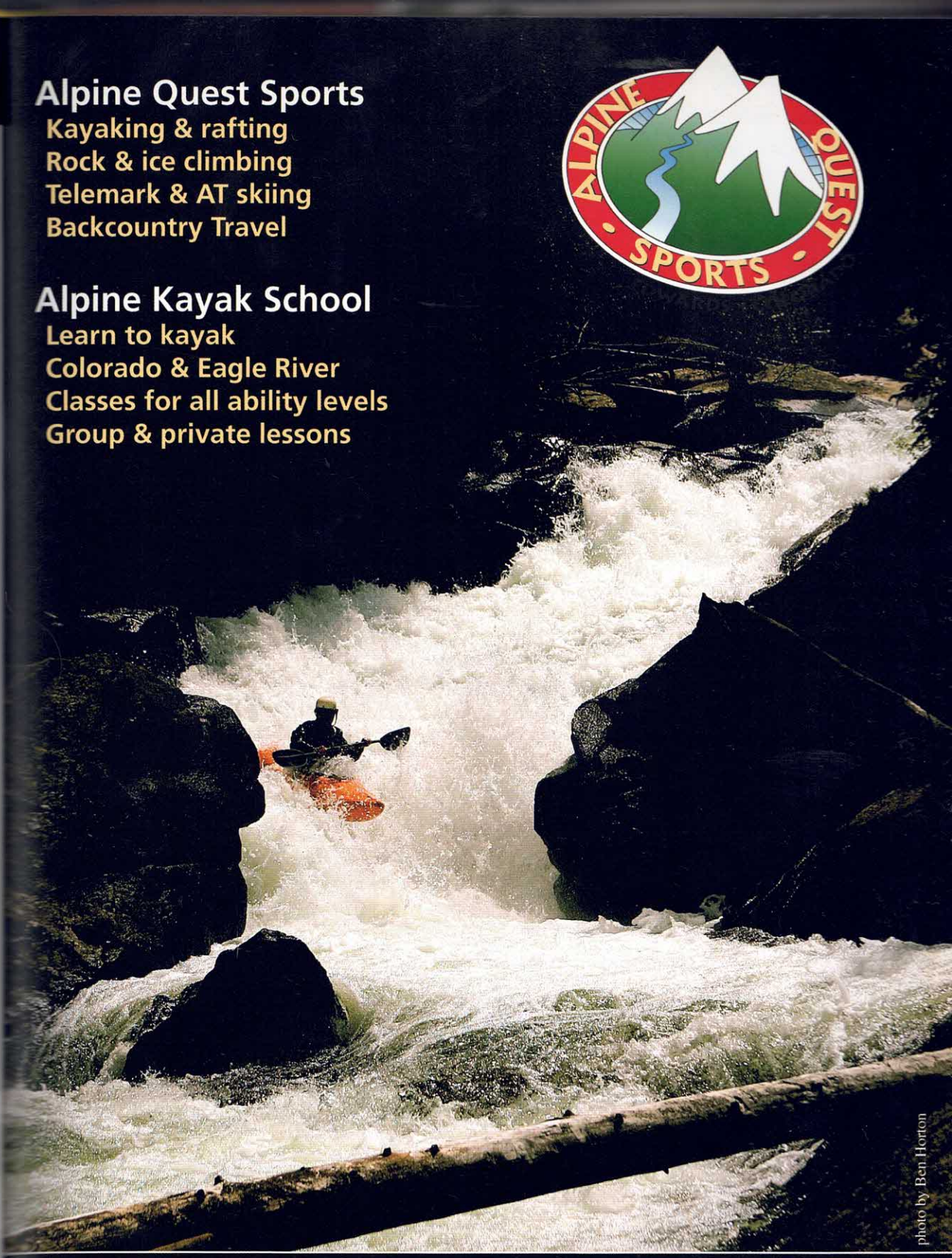

photo by Ben Horton

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Rock Creek

This section was discovered by Colorado legend and founder of Wave Sport Kayaks, Chan Zwanzig. It is steep, shallow, eddy-less and runs in the spring if there is sufficient low elevation snow in the Gore Range. There are significant signs of man's intrusion into the life of this creek, including a rapid through a pitch black culvert. The exit to the tunnel is intense, and the river immediately drops into the steepest section of the run. There is a very limited group of individuals who will enjoy this run, or catch it with adequate flow.

Directions: The put-in is off Hwy 134 west of Gore Pass. Turn south onto FR 206, go one mile, turn right onto FR 225 and go one mile to a parking lot with an outhouse. The take-out from Hwy 131 at McCoy is five miles north on 4 Rd to a rough road leading left down to the river.

CFS	150<best<400
Class	V+<400<NR (and Ps)
Quality	★★★ in the Tunnel
Gradient	260 avg
Length	7 miles
Season	April, May
Gauge	visual, we think
Put-in	Gore Pass
Take-out	Hwy 31

Sweetwater Creek

Sweetwater Creek flows off the east face of the Flat Tops Wilderness and goes through some cool BLM land near the confluence of the Eagle and the Colorado rivers. The rapids are mild but creek hazards are present including wood, overhanging shrub-life and barbed wire fences. The whitewater is not classic but the terrain is scenic and for a class III paddler this can be a fun adventure. You can run a cool falls near the put-in ranch.

Directions: From Rd 301 north of Dotsero, the take-out is where the road crosses over the creek or wherever looks good somewhere higher up. Rd 40 parallels the Sweetwater from Rd 301 upstream to the put-in at Pine Valley Ranch.

CFS	200<best
Class	IV-
Quality	★
Gradient	120 fpm
Length	4.5 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Pine Valley Ranch
Take-out	Rd 301 nr Dotsero

Piney River

This is a long and remote class V run that has not seen much recent action. The Eagles Nest Wilderness provides a dramatic backdrop for a high quality adventure but access and timing issues have plagued recent attempts. A Forest Service road leading north out of Vail can deliver you straight to the headwaters. Private landowners have illegally denied access to the area by padlocking the Forest Service gate where the road begins to climb towards the Piney.

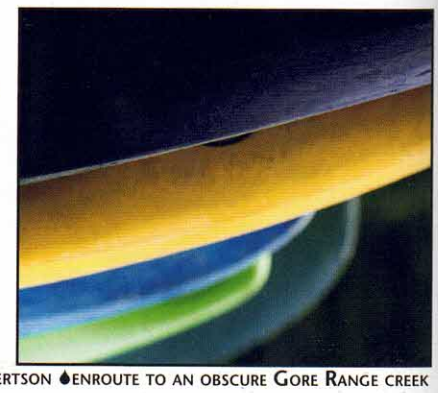
Great rapids exist on this stretch, including the super gnarly Beaver Attack. Make sure to bring your heavy duty bolt cutters for the gate if you plan on getting to the put-in and maybe a saw of some kind for the wood that was flossed in the mid-90s, but has most likely returned.

Directions: The put-in is found by taking Red Sandstone Rd (FR 700) north out of Mid-Vail, veering right and staying on FR 700 towards Piney Lake to Piney Crossing. The take-out is at State Bridge after the confluence with the Colorado River on Hwy 131.

CFS	600<min<1000<best
Class	V+
Quality	★★★★ ?
Gradient	200 avg
Length	19 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	Piney @ State Bridge
Put-in	Piney Crossing
Take-out	State Bridge

Alkali Creek (no beta box)

In a ridiculous effort to cover every section that the bible did, I've decided to include the passage of Alkali Creek, which probably never flows in anything but record-breaking snow years. But, if the moons align, it's briefly roadside to Hwy 131, before dropping steeply to the Eagle River, and riverside I-70. Rumors of a dodge sieve van should probably be heeded as safety advice. Otherwise, this is the Hwy 131 roadside and unofficial bathroom break.



LEIF EMBERTSON ♦ENROUTE TO AN OBSCURE GORE RANGE CREEK

Scott Willoughby 🚶 Ken "Hobie" Hoeve 💧Homestake Creek

Homestake Creek

Homestake Creek is the shortest, lowest-volume creek in this book that actually deserves a write-up. Most commonly paddled as the espresso start to the Gilman Gorge, the ¼ mile section drops around 120' (equivalent to an impressive 480 fpm). The fact that it has been run as low as 20cfs is even more shocking, but I'd consider a mere 50 cfs to be the worthwhile minimum (at least for those that buy their own boats).

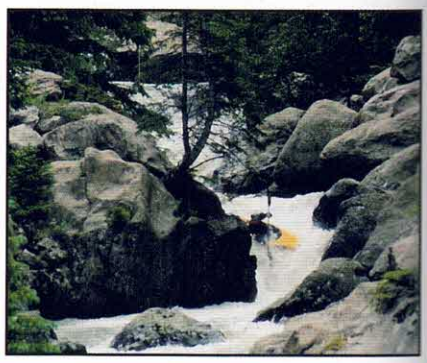
The run has three distinct sections, the first known as the Intro Rapids, where paddlers get a taste of the chunky rock pile character after a few strokes. The crux of this section has a tricky S-turn line that accelerates paddlers into the final set of clean boofs, and a deceleration pool.

The river cleans up substantially for the center drops. Two hard right lines avoid fan rocks (the second is Boof or Die), before a very quick lead-in forces paddlers to thread a left line as the setup to Leap of Faith (8'). Most rolls occur at the pool here, since flips elsewhere usually involve sweet pins and even sweeter swims.

The final section, known collectively as Piece of Shit, is the steepest series of drops. This is the most commonly portaged segment, and when attempted the most exciting. A river left eddy hidden under tree branches provides the best setup for success, and pins are a common occurrence at the bottom, which lacks a pool but provides plenty of rocks.

Directions: Roadside at the put-in for Gilman Gorge, off of Hwy 24, south of the suspension bridge. Scout the entire run in dry clothes, and bring a shuttle driver to run laps.

CFS	50<optimal<250
Class	V<150<V+
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	120' (480 fpm)
Length	.25 miles
Season	April-July
Gauge	H-Stake @ Gold Park
Put-in	top of rockpile
Take-out	bottom of rockpile



Eagle Source

This run begins with the flat and meandering It's-a-Small-World section, with a few beaver dams until it narrows and enters Mini Chute. Here the creek is constricted by the railroad tracks on the left and a steep slope on the right. A handful of smaller drops lead into a hard left turn, marking Bone Zone directly above the first railroad bridge. There are lots of f-u rocks here, but the right hand lines tend to offer slightly less abuse.

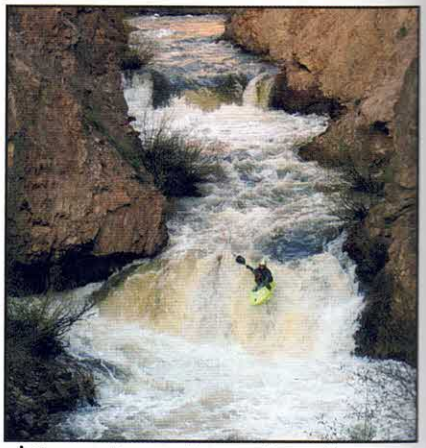
After Bone Zone expect the willows and blind corners to keep your attention. After the willows there are a few busy sections, a couple more railroad bridges, and some flat until the creek makes a hard left into a mini gorge, named Two Fat Chicks. Take out on river right just upstream from the bend to scout, or you might end up running it blind. The gorge consists of two back-to-back drops, about 5' and 8' high. Just make sure to enter the second drop on the left to avoid Rick's Rock that sits across the entire right side of the landing area. If you line up the money-flake on the second drop, you can launch this one!

After Two Fat Chicks, the creek keeps your attention with some more willows, busy whitewater, and a few beaver dams until the last major rapid, Not Done Yet. Enter on the left, drop a small ledge or two, punch a few holes, and enjoy a busy section into town. Take out river left at the gauging station, and head straight to Mango's in Red Cliff for fish tacos and PBR.

Directions: Put in where the creek meets the railroad tracks north of Pando at the end of FR 709 off Hwy 24 (north of Camp Hale). Take out at the south end of Eagle Street in the town of Red Cliff, at the dirt cul-de-sac and bridge.

-Chad Dyson

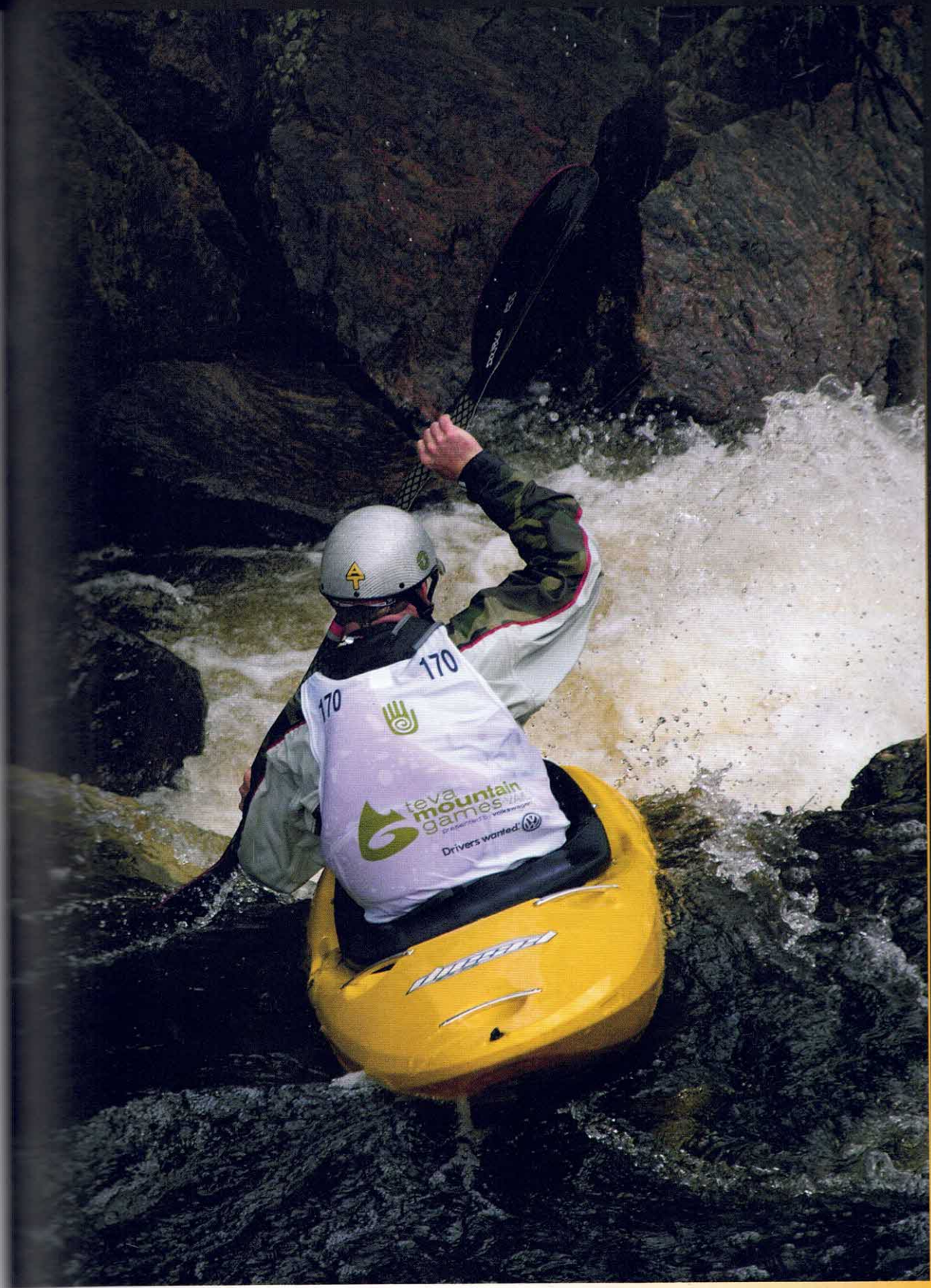
CFS	200<min<300<rare
Class	IV+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	130 fpm
Length	3 miles
Season	June
Gauge	Eagle River @ Red Cliff
Put-in	north Camp Hale
Take-out	Red Cliff



Kirk Rorrer Gordon Dalton Leap of Faith, Homestake

Chad Dyson Romeo Baylosis Two Fat Chicks, Eagle Source

The espresso start to the toxic latte downstream. Or the triple-shot espresso for the three quick laps that you're about to do down Homestake. Umm, I love coffee—and PBR apres in Red Cliff.



Katie Selby Jimmy Blakeney racing through the Teva Games

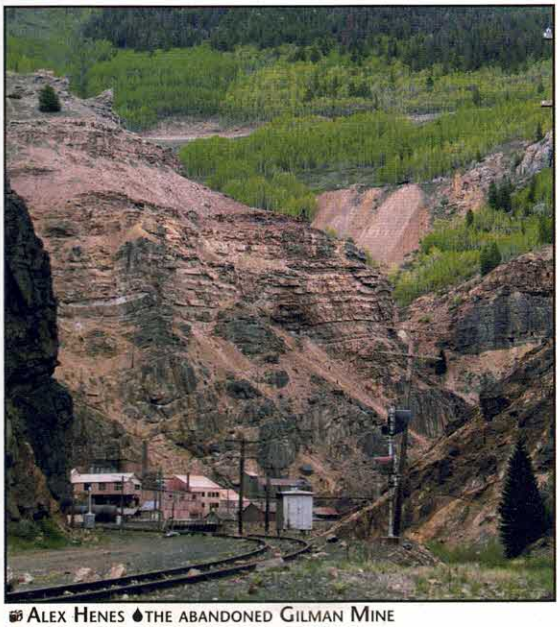
Gilman Gorge

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	250	300	400	500
Character	rocky with pools	pools disappear	holes noticeable	toxic adrenaline
Class	IV+ (V-)	V-	V- (V)	V
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	120 fpm			
Remoteness	easy to walk out on old road and rail grade, but a long walk			
Hitchability	okay, but not great			
Length	4 miles			
Season	May, June, early July			
Gauge	Eagle near Minturn			
Put-in	under suspension bridge			
Take-out	Tigawan Rd (FR 707)			

As the standard creeking fare in the Vail Valley area, it would be reasonable to assume that the Eagle River's Gilman Gorge flowed through a beautiful lush canyon and contained fantastic natural drops. Expect the opposite environment. A float through here is a float through time, as paddlers observe the Super Fund Site of the long abandoned Gilman Mine operation surrounding the river at the halfway point of the run.

Although not roadside, the river is far from natural due to an abandoned railroad grade on one side and an off-limits mine road on the other. The riverbanks are shaped like a canal and the rock is sharp, causing minor blood shed to those that find themselves upside down. The good news is that most of the industrial debris is no longer present in all but the last rapid.

The first half of the run is read-and-run class III-IV, with fun laterals and holes to bomb through until the first railroad bridge and the flow addition of Fall Creek. Pass under the bridge and immediately scout (walking across Fall Creek sucks). Fall Creek Rapid is the second largest drop of the run, with a 10' crux that forms a very large hole at certain levels.



ALEX HENES ♦ THE ABANDONED GILMAN MINE

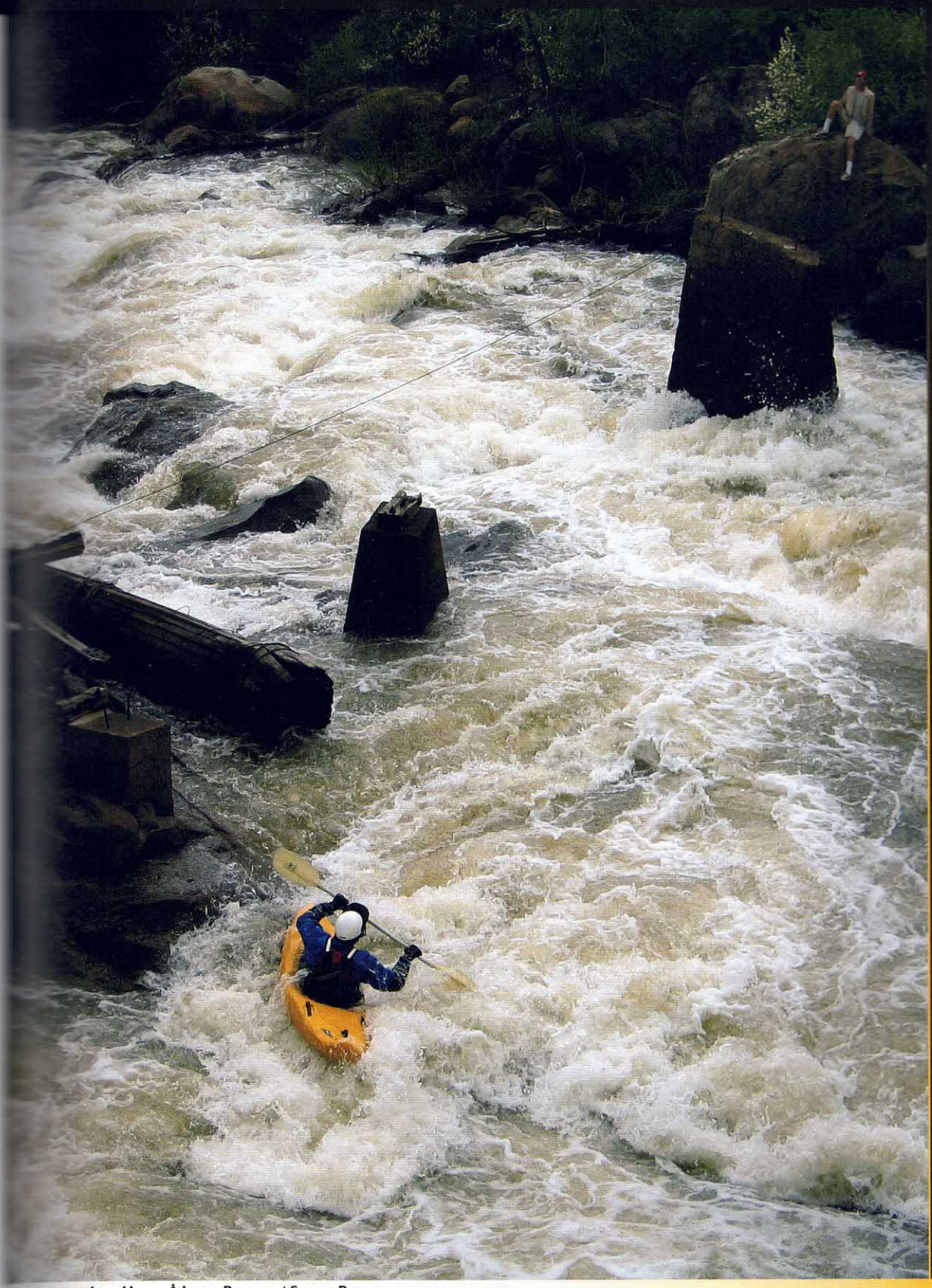
Below here is the heart of the run, which at regular levels is predominately class IV+ and chronologically contains S-Turn, Mega Boof, and Tower rapid. At higher flows the holes in this ½ mile long section can get pretty juicy, but following a local can prevent the need for a scout since the lines are easy to make. Groups sans a guide may find it easier to scout all three of these rapids at the same time.

The river mellows until the arrival of the second railroad bridge, necessitating a river left scout above the bridge. The toughest rapid of the run, Slurry Pipe, can be viewed from the railroad bridge, and scouted thoroughly river right below the trestle. At low flow it goes pretty smoothly, but higher flows up the ante with two big holes to miss at the top, followed by a very long and rocky run-out (not to mention the dilapidated bridge piling). Take out shortly below this rapid on river left.

Directions

Whether through luck, or good public relations by local kayakers, trespassing issues seem to no longer be a problem. From Minturn, take Hwy 24 south, past Cross Creek, and turn right onto Tigawan Road (FR 707). Don't park at the unwelcoming No Kayaking sign, but continue for about a ½ mile to a less threatening pullout. To get to the put-in, continue south on Hwy 24 up and over the river right side of the gorge until crossing a large suspension bridge. Turn right after the bridge, and drive a ¼ mile downhill, turning left onto a dirt road that leads to the river (railroad property).

A float through time is to be had by paddlers who manage the class IV & V whitewater of the upper Eagle as it weaves through the abandoned Gilman Mine operation.



Alex Henes Jason Roberts Slurry Pipe at a medium high level

Cross Creek

CFS	140<min 160<optimal<250 250<NR
Class	V+
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	400 fpm
Length	1/2 mile
Season	mid-June, July (gated)
Gauge	Cross Creek near Minturn
Put-in	Cross Creek Trail
Take-out	Tigawan Rd

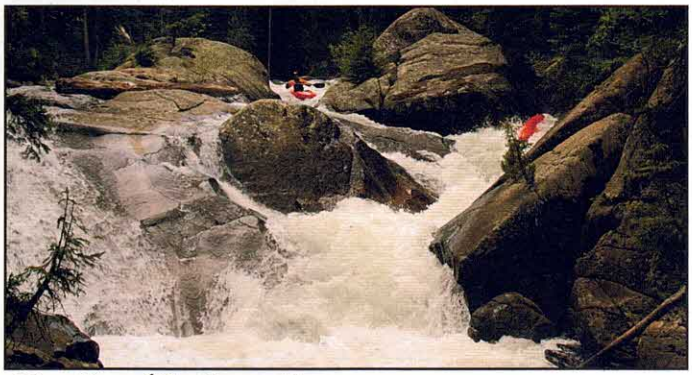
Cross Creek is a low volume creek that has it all—falls, slides, ledges, and boulder gardens. The riverbed is granite as far up as you are willing to hike but wood has been an issue for years, despite local paddler efforts to keep the ½-mile lower run consistently clean. The farthest expedition to date has been a one-day attempt to paddle from about four miles in on the Cross Creek Trail all the way down to Maloit Park. Even though the boats and gear were carried in the day before, and the crew of two paddlers and one safety/photographer had an early start the next day, the mission began to turn epic late in the afternoon. Starting off with a set of nasty bloody knuckles from the right line of Snap, and ending in total exhaustion at the park just before sunset, Cross Creek lived up to its reputation and nickname of Choss Creek. Bring the elbow pads for this one.

The normal run is only about a ½-mile long, but packs the biggest bang for your buck due to the high concentration of runnable drops without portages. The river left offers the best scouting and safety opportunities for all the rapids, and this section is typically broken down into four parts—Snap, from Snap through the 90-Degree-Falls, Triple Drop, and Super Cross. The put-in is immediately above the first rapid, Snap, where the creek splits in two and slides down both sides of an island. You can go right or left of the island, with the left side being more difficult due to the tricky twists and a challenging setup to avoid the overhanging shelf at the bottom of the island.

After Snap, the creek calms briefly with a few small ledges and another slide that ends in a pool directly above the biggest drop of the short run, Electric Slide. This slide looks intimidating due to a tricky rooster tail notch entrance with a trouble-causing flake on the left, in addition to having most of the water push into a wall at the bottom where the slide makes a hard bend over a ledge. Even though it looks slim, if you nail the boat angle at the top, a clean run can be had missing both the notch and the wall.

The pool at the bottom of Electric Slide allows just enough time to collect your thoughts before having to navigate through some wood and set up for the 90 Degree Falls. The only line here is as far left as you can go, then drop off the falls sideways. Although it's not a difficult lead-in to the falls, ¾ of the water flows into a nasty pin potential of rocks and wood. Be heads up.

The runout of the falls allows you to catch an eddy river left, so you can scout Triple Drop. This rapid consists of three ledges with the last one feeding into a crease. For additional style points, try to push up high on the slab rock for the classic sideways move.



Chad Dyson Ben Horton Snap, the full contact line

After Triple Drop the creek mellows and floats through a rocky class II/III section until the gradient increases again, marking the entrance of Super Cross. The rapid is a long and twisting combination of ledges and slides, ending in the take out pool river right. Although it's not the hardest or steepest rapid, the slide ends in a small must-make pool. A blown eddy would quickly lead into a wood choked sieve/falls combination.

Take the faint fishing trail uphill that connects with the Cross Creek Trail and hike back to the trailhead. Pre-scout the entire run before putting-on.

Directions: The Cross Creek Trailhead can be found on Tigawan Rd, just past the Gilman Gorge take-out. Put in about ¾-mile up the Cross Creek Trail, where the trail meets the creek at a flat portion just above the first drop. Take out at the pool below Super Cross on river right, and hike back up to the main trail via a fisherman's path. The trailhead is gated until mid-June.

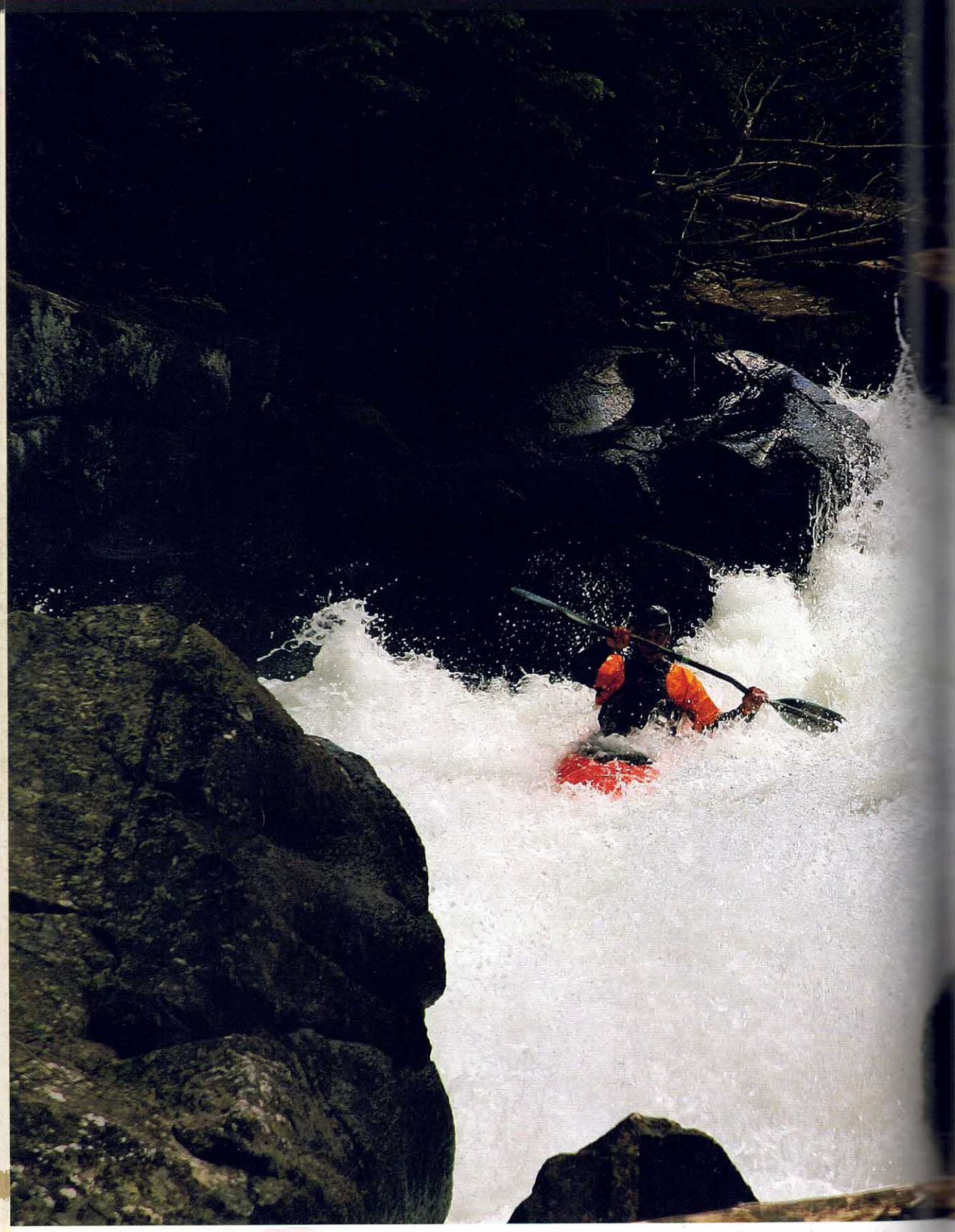
Hidden Falls (no beta box)

If you are ever in the Homestake area and jonsin' for some stunt boating, drive up to Homestake Reservoir and check out Hidden Falls. Thanks to a diversion tunnel from Missouri Creek and low lake levels early in the season, the outlet spills down the granite shore creating a slide as high as 80'. But due to a lack of aeration at the base and probably a flat landing, most runs happen when there is about 40-50' showing.

-Chad Dyson (both)

Flowing north out of the rugged & wild Holy Cross Wilderness, Cross Creek stays true to its roots. Nicknamed Choss Creek, bloody knuckles and hits are fair game for a missed line.

Jared Johnson Chad Dyson Electric Slide



Chad Dyson Ben Horton Electric Slide, Cross Creek

Black Gore

Black Gore Creek separates from the rest of Gore Creek at the far-east side of Vail, and quickly climbs towards I-70, paralleling the interstate in the upper reaches. The paddling here is micro-sized, but the gradient makes up for the lack of width, and further expands the paddling options of the Vail Valley and nearby Summit County. Despite being interstate-side, the scenery is also pretty good. There is only one line, so keep the boat straight.

Vail Pass

The Vail Pass run is single-track-boating at its finest. A mere 1.2-miles long, the gradient is concentrated in only a handful of sections.

Put in at the small pool immediately above where the creek drops away and starts Crazy Train. This is the biggest total vertical drop on the creek, although there is some discrepancy on the actual height of this rapid (70'-100') because you can't see the whole thing from one spot. It's basically a series of slides, ledges, and falls all combined into one. Make sure to boof the last vertical falls. If you go deep and hit bottom, you will vertically pin instantly on the sticky sandstone rock. In three descents we have had three vertical pins, although it's relatively safe and easy to get out. The drop is worth it, but until you hit the tributary that kicks in on the right, the run is bony, has a high pin-potential, and is somewhat annoying—but you really don't have time to think about it.

The river will at least double in flow, if not more once you hit the tributary coming in on the right about a 1/2-mile below Crazy Train. From here it's pretty much non-stop V to the take-out. Immediately below the feeder is Two Tickets, a fast 15' silde-to-vert combination. Aim for the ski jump right-of-center, and see how far you can launch. The small pool leads down a slide section and bends hard left into Paradise, a very fast semi-twisty chute that ends in a river wide ledge-hole. Be careful of the log on the left side of the entrance of Paradise. It's a nasty root ball but can be avoided running along the wall on the right. There is small eddy at the bottom right of Paradise for recovery or a re-gathering point.

In a short distance there is a defined diagonal horizon line. Run right-of-center and down the slide. From here to the take-out is basically eddy-less, non-stop, heads-up boating. Keep it straight and follow the water. Be alert for a log jam just above the take-out, where the creek bends hard right. There is a right line through, and at high flow the water may go over the top of the log jam. The good thing is, gear lost from above ends up here for easy recovery.

CFS	4"<min<5.5"<optimal
Class	V
Quality	★★★
Gradient	465 fpm
Length	1.2 miles
Season	late May, June
Gauge	visual (Gore Crk hint)
Put-in	I-70 mm 187
Take-out	I-70 mm 185

Gauge: There is a gauge at the lip of Crazy Train. Minimum is around 4", and 5.5" is the ideal medium-high level. Crazy Train can be done higher, but the other stuff gets scary. Run late in the day to capitalize on peak flows.

Directions: Put in at the first truck ramp on the west side of the pass, near mm 187 (eastbound lanes). To reach the creek, park next to the bike path across from the start of the off-ramp, and hike down to the top of Crazy Train. The take-out is hidden, and requires 4WD or hiking. If you have 4WD, pull-off the right side of I-70 before the bridge at mm 185 and drive along the guard rail (actually right at the brown bike path mm 185.7). Turn down the grass to a faint road and follow it west to the creek.

Fish Ladders & Black Gore Gorge

This is hard to access despite being roadside to I-70. The Fish Ladders are hike-to kayaking for only a ¼-mile of action. The action is a weird set of approximately 15-ledges, ranging in height from 4-6' and IV+ in difficulty. Either hike-and-huck this stretch, or continue downstream 200-yards to the portage start of the Black Gore Gorge.

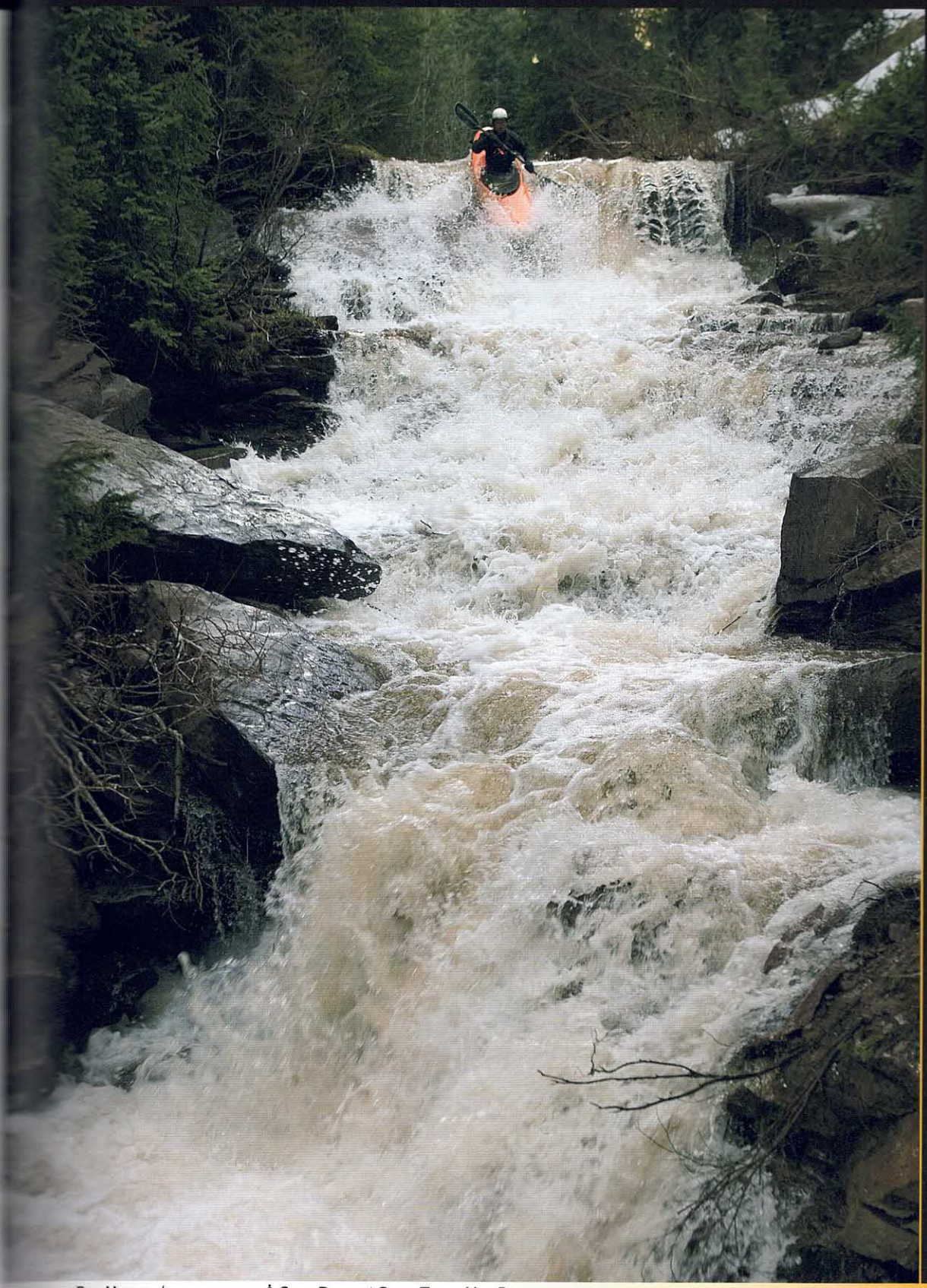
The first drop of the lower hasn't been run, due to an ugly rock outcropping dangerously close to the path of would-be freefall. Every other drop has been run, including a turbulent slot, a clean 20' vert, ugly 6', and then another 10' vert. The action mellows to good class IV below, with a take-out on Upper Gore Creek. It isn't a common run since getting around or through the gorge is tricky.

Directions: To scout Black Gore Gorge, pull-off the I-70 EB lanes about two miles from East Vail, immediately after a bridge. The portage put-in is underneath the bridge. The fish ladders are best accessed by pulling off of the WB lanes one-mile upstream of the bridge.

CFS	4"<min<5.5"<optimal
Class	IV+ & V (NR)
Quality	★★
Gradient	310 fpm, 505 gorge
Length	.25 mile or longer
Season	late May, June
Gauge	visual (Gore Crk hint)
Riv Access	I-70 bridge

-Chad Dyson (all)

THE GRADIENT MAKES UP FOR THE LACK OF CREEK-WIDTH, AND FURTHER EXPANDS THE PADDLING OPTIONS OF THE VAIL VALLEY AND NEARBY SUMMIT COUNTY. TIME FOR A LITTLE SINGLETRACK KAYAKING.



BEN HORTON/BENHORTON.BIZ CHAD DYSON CRAZY TRAIN, VAIL PASS SECTION

Vail Town & Gore Creek

Vail is an interesting place. The town is filled with a healthy ski bum population, retirees, and a handful of random rich people that come out to party it up, while hiding from Denver or wherever. It seems that most of the long term and older residents eventually make their residence further down valley in Avon, Edwards, or Eagle, where property values are reasonable. But the party scene is alive and well downtown, and the kayaking isn't bad either, and quite the scene develops when the Teva Moutain Games takes over for a weekend.

Upper Gore Creek

A quick and stealthy jog across the golf course delivers paddlers to a handful of good ledge holes, but a roadside put-in also works. Ledge features are the signature of this upper section, and when the water gets high the play gets really fun in this small river.

Stoner's will especially love the Betty Ford Hole, which is the defining feature of the run and located under the covered bridge that leads to the Betty Ford Rehab Gardens. Shortly below this the gawking starts, as tourists are now stream side to you on the downtown walking paths.

Directions: Put in at or near the golf course off of the East Vail exit 180. There is a dirt pull-off from the frontage road that is riverside, for parking. Take out at the park.

CFS	500<min<800<best
Class	II+<500<III-<1500<IV-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	65 fpm
Length	2.3 miles
Season	May, June, early July
Gauge	Gore Crk @ mouth
Put-in	Golf Course
Take-out	Park

Vail Park

When you reach the open clearing near the center of town (basically the walking hub from the downtown parking structures) you've reached the Vail Park, seamlessly tucked into the Alps-style architecture of downtown. Although it from lack of flow, the signature feature here, found between the set of double bridges, offers loops, space godzillas, and any other hole move or combo that you can imagine. At lower flow it's well worth exercising the park-and-play option rather than running the entire section. When flows are good, plan on either starting or finishing your day with the Vail Park.

Directions: Exit 176 is Main Vail, and turning left at the roundabout will lead to the downtown parking structure on the right. High clearance rigs can park on the top level, and this is best for drying gear.

CFS	300<min<800<best
Class	III+
Eddy	excellent but small
Quality	★★★★
Season	May, June, early July
Gauge	Gore Crk @ mouth
Riv Access	Main Vail parking area

Lower Gore Creek

Things pick up quickly in this section, with the first warning of ensuing action coming from the stench of the Sewer Treatment Plant. Three rapids are in here, with a few different holes and rocks to avoid, but it is all more fun in a playboat for many. Beginners will want to stick to the Upper at higher flows.

Two scary pipes keep things exciting an 1/8-mile past the second Intermountain bridge. Kayakers can usually make it under these, but they are definitely in the way. The West Vail Exit marks the end of the town scenery, where paddlers are soon forced to negotiate a DOW game control fence, and immediately drop into the final class IV action. Near the bottom of this is a good play feature at some levels. The train bridge can become a tight squeeze at higher levels, so portage if unsure of success.

Perhaps the best advantage of paddling Lower Gore Creek is that you pretty much have to paddle the crux of Dowd, a sweet excuse to spend a few extra minutes on the water.

Directions: Put in at the park. The West Vail exit 173 offers an access point for Lower Gore Creek, but isn't as preferred as just linking up with one of the Dowd Chute take-outs to round out a longer class IV run.

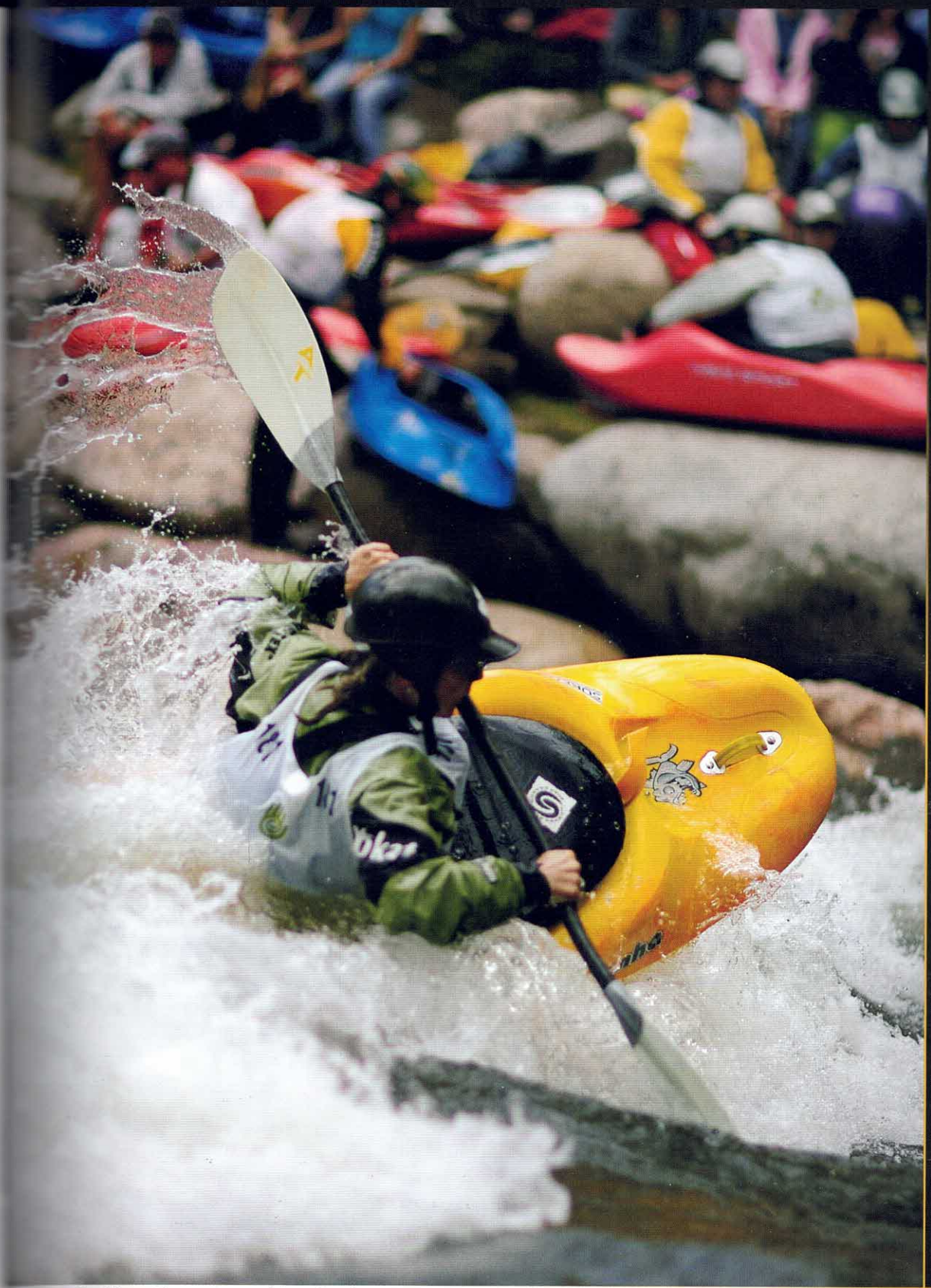
CFS	300<min<800<best
Class	III+<500<IV-<1000<IV
Quality	★★★
Gradient	85 fpm
Length	3.9 miles
Season	May, June, early July
Gauge	Gore Crk @ mouth
Put-in	Vail Park
Take-out	Dowd Chutes

Upper-Upper Gore Creek (no beta box)

Need a kayaking adventure other than what everyone else in Vail does? Take a 30-45 minute hike up the Gore Creek Trailhead, scouting along the way, especially for wood. Class IV-V whitewater at levels above 350.

Directions: Exit 180, East Vail and continue east along the frontage road to the CG.

THE COLD AND SWIFT GORE CREEK IS A WELCOMING RETREAT FROM THE RETREAT. LOOPING YOUR KAYAK THROUGH THESE WATERS IS THE ONLY ADDICTION THE BETTY FORD HOLE CAN'T CURE.



BEN HORTON/BENHORTON.BIZ JESSIE RICE CENTER STAGE AT THE TEVA MOUNTAIN GAMES, VAIL WHITEWATER PARK

Minturn & Dowd Chute

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	500	1100	2400	3000
S Character	rocky	mellow for beginner	can get fast	play thru Dowd?
D Character	ledge like	some play	solid wave train	bring the snorkel
Slalom Class	II+	III-	III	III+
Dowd Class	III+	IV	IV+	V
Slalom Quality	★★	★★	★★★	★★★
Dowd Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	70 fpm Dowd			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good			
Length	4.8 miles Slalom put-in to Dowd, 2.5 miles Minturn to Dowd, 1.3 miles Dowd			
Season	May, June, July			
Gauge	Eagle near Avon			
Put-in	optional along Hwy 6, or Forest Service Building parking area			
Take-out	for Slalom course the town works, Riverbend Bus Stop for Dowd			

The town of Minturn is a cool little getaway from the high class rentals of Vail, and the suburban feeling Avon. Kind of an underground town to the side of Vail, and you know it's good when the local bartender fires up Homestake regularly.

Slalom Course

I don't know of anyone who regularly does this, but it's completely possible to run from Homestake through Dowd Chute in a day. If you're looking for a work out then it may be worth it more than once, but otherwise save this section for guiding a beginner down. Starting as high as Tigawan Road will give you the longest stretch of III-, but numerous pulloffs exist to this roadside section.

Once you reach the town the motivated type can enjoy bashing some slalom gates that local paddlers have been maintaining on a seemingly annual basis. The eddies here are nice too, and the in-town river is a little more natural feeling than this run's neighbor. Cruise on down to the Forest Service take-out, or link in with Dowd.

Dowd Chute

Dowd Chute is a rapid that is special enough to serve as a quick run, or can be combined with any of three other area runs—Minturn Slalom Course, Gore Creek, or the Upper Eagle downstream. Below the I-70 bridge the river picks up into a 1/4-mile long series of large waves and flushy holes, allowing for tricky eddy catching, on-the-fly surfing, and huge downstream aerial wave moves. Less experienced paddlers will struggle to stay on-line and upright, while more advanced paddlers will be able to relax and play the dynamic currents for as long as possible.

The only drawback to paddlers pushing their limits on Dowd are the often long, cold, and rocky swims. The river is surrounded by blast rock from I-70 and Hwy 6 on river right and railroad tracks on river left. A strong roll will make runs down Dowd much more enjoyable for the intermediate kayaker.

Below the rapid, the river widens and optional river access can be found on river left at a Hwy 6 pullout (which I prefer). Unfortunately, the high water of 2003 washed out a very good playspot on river right. Paddling downstream to a railroad bridge is the start of a river right move to avoid the bridge pylon and logs that often collect here. Another ¼ mile below this is a second railroad bridge, and subsequent river left take-out at a set of steps leading to the Riverbend bus stop. Parking is limited here.

Directions

From I-70, exit 171 and turn south on Hwy 24 towards Minturn. Turn right into the large parking area at the Forest Service Visitor Center. Take Hwy 6 the other direction to either a pull off after the rapid, or all the way to the Riverbend bus stop. For the Slalom Course put-in, take Hwy 6 east until turning right on Tigawan Rd, and parking towards the end, at the same take-out as Gilman.

Mountain Games/Toni Axelrod ♦ Boater-X at the Teva Games, Dowd Chute

The town of Minturn is the retreat from what Vail encompasses, and a nice little slalom course in town epitomizes this. A far cry from the much different, bustling and big Dowd Chute.

Mountain Games/Toni Axelrod ♦rafter-x at the Teva Games, Dowd Chute

Upper & Lower Eagle

It's good to be a Vail Valley boater when the high elevation run-off season is happening. The Eagle River west of Vail offers yet another long section of great play and beginner paddling to compliment the Gore Creek play runs higher up. The season can be short and though possibly the country's most obnoxious mountain highway, I-70, parallels the river for the length of this stretch, fairly scenic boating can be found. With the addition of a new play park, the non-threatening whitewater and plenty of commercial outfits, the valley tourists and tubers can find their entertainment here, as well as the more conventional river users—the rafters, kayakers and canoeists that utilize all of the many miles of whitewater on this major tributary of the Upper Colorado.

Upper Eagle

This run begins at the take-out of Dowd Chute and is divided from the lower run by a water-treatment plant just downstream of Edwards. Many locals will boat the stretch from the confluence down to Avon and call it a day, as plenty of good class III whitewater and play is found in these first few miles. This will probably become an even more common scenario in the future, with the completed construction of a new whitewater park near the classic Bob Bridge on Avon Rd. In September 2006 Eagle locals watched as a man hole was lowered into the riverbed to help secure the largest of the new features, already tagged Bob Senior.

From Avon down to the treatment plant the river starts out mild, with shallow class II and the possible wood pile. Just before arriving in Edwards the river passes under two bridges and lets loose into a barrage of high impact waves and tricky class III+ whitewater. Remember though—these are *just* waves and you *just* need to have your brace and combat roll down to make it through. Also, remember that the best boaters make honest assessments of their skills and that at high water, if you don't *just* have the aforementioned skills, then be able to swim aggressively for shore. This is the Edwards Mile—a great stepping-stone to controlled medium-flow descents of Dowd Chute.

Directions: The put-in for the Upper Eagle is the same as the take-out for Dowd Chute, the Riverbend bus stop. Take out either at Bob's bridge in Avon or, at the upstream side of the Hwy 6 bridge, about a mile downstream of Edwards, near the water treatment plant.

CFS	600<min<1k<best<3k
Class	III
Quality	★★
Gradient	60 fpm
Length	7 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	Eagle Riv @ Avon
Put-in	Riverbend Bus Stop
Take-out	Bob's Bridge in Avon

Lower Eagle

Hare boaters and those still working out the fine art of bracing, will want to run the section from Edwards down to Wolcott. This is a nice, mostly class II training ground with the entire array of riffle sizes and swirling eddy lines.

Trestle Rapid can be found at Wolcott. This is solid class III with the possibility of holes. Scout right at the railroad bridge. Another couple of class III rapids remain and a few more miles of easy water before Eagle.

At high water one of the best park 'n' play spots in the region swirls to life behind the rodeo grounds. A set of two waves forms Rumble Seat, a formidable and challenging end to a Lower Eagle run for the newbies (IV), or an air blunt, or two, or twelve for the seasoned player. For the non-aggressive there is luckily a take-out at Chambers Park upstream of this wondrous natural feature, but for those in the know, the glassy 18-Wheeler followed by the munchy Monster Truck are the best places to throw down in the Eagle Valley.

Directions: Put in near the water treatment plant, a mile downstream of Edwards on Hwy 6. The take-out is at Chambers Park just beyond the Eagle exit, off I-70 on Hwy 6. The rodeo grounds are further west on Hwy 6.

CFS	600<min<1k<best<3k
Class	II (III x2)<1k<III
Quality	★★
Gradient	35 fpm
Length	18 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	Eagle Riv @ Avon
Put-in	Water Treatment Plant
Take-out	Rodeo Grounds

Matt Solomon Sean Vierling suring the natural Eagle hole, prime at high flow

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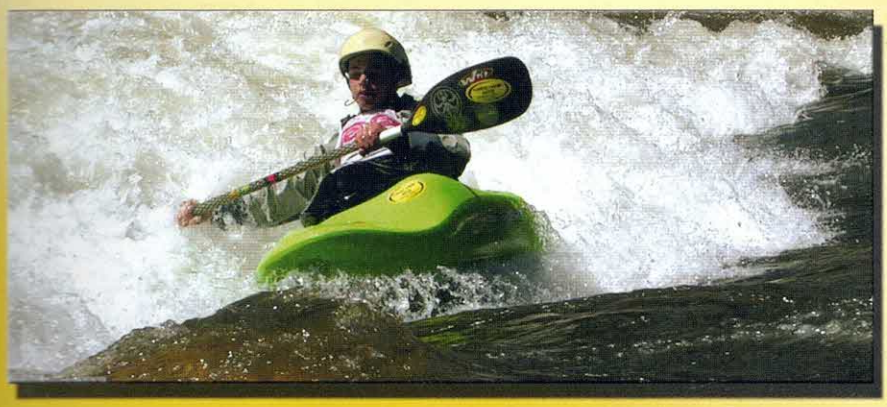
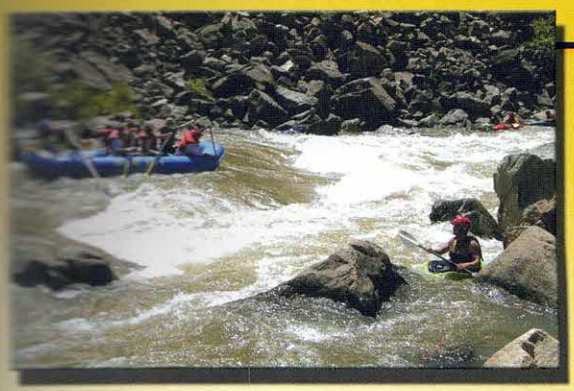


KAYAKING AND RAFTING SUPPLIES



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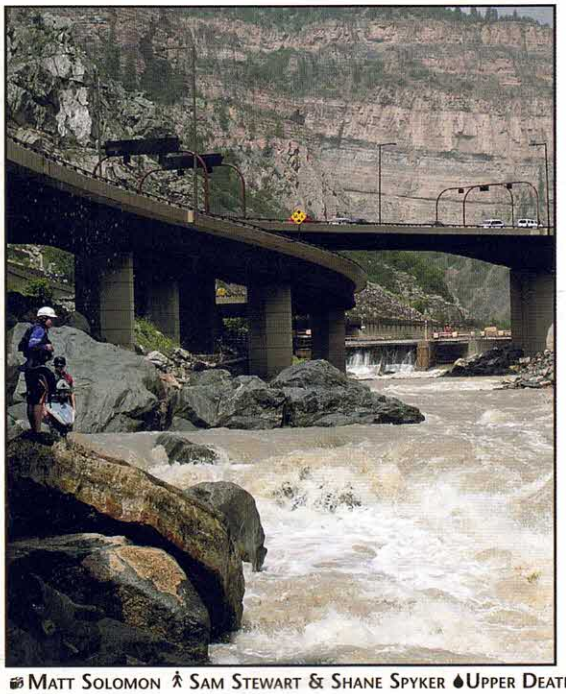
Glenwood Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	500	1800	4000	6000
Character	Shoshone play only	min for Barrel	Shoshone flush	Barrel or Grizz
Barrel Class	not running	IV+ (NR)	V (NR)	V+ (NR)
Shosho Class	III-	III+	IV	IV
Grizzly Class	II+	III-	III-	III
Barrel Quality	not running	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
S & G Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★
Gradient	85 fpm Barrel Springs, 40 fpm Shoshone, 30 fpm Grizzly			
Remoteness	interstate side			
Hitchability	good, with bike shuttle and walking options			
Length	2.2 miles Barrel Springs, 1.6 miles Shoshone, 5.8 miles Grizzly			
Season	April to July for Barrel, Shoshone down is year round—ice bridge dependent			
Gauge	Colorado River near Dotsero			
Put-in	Hanging Lakes exit 125, Shoshone exit 123, Grizzly exit 121			
Take-out	Grizzly exit 121, No Name exit 119, Two Rivers Park exit 116			

Glenwood Canyon is in many ways known more for a significant engineering feat—the two-tiered Interstate 70 snaking its way through this beautiful canyon—than for whitewater. The highway constantly bends and dips, and jets through an occasional tunnel just to get through what I can only imagine was once a more scenic and mellower version of Gore, with untouched cliff walls and riverbanks. Those days are long gone, with a train paralleling river left, the rambunctious interstate to the right, and a diversion dam to feed the Shoshone Power Plant in the center of the canyon.



Matt Solomon ⛹ Sam Stewart & Shane Spyker ♦Upper Death Scout, Barrel

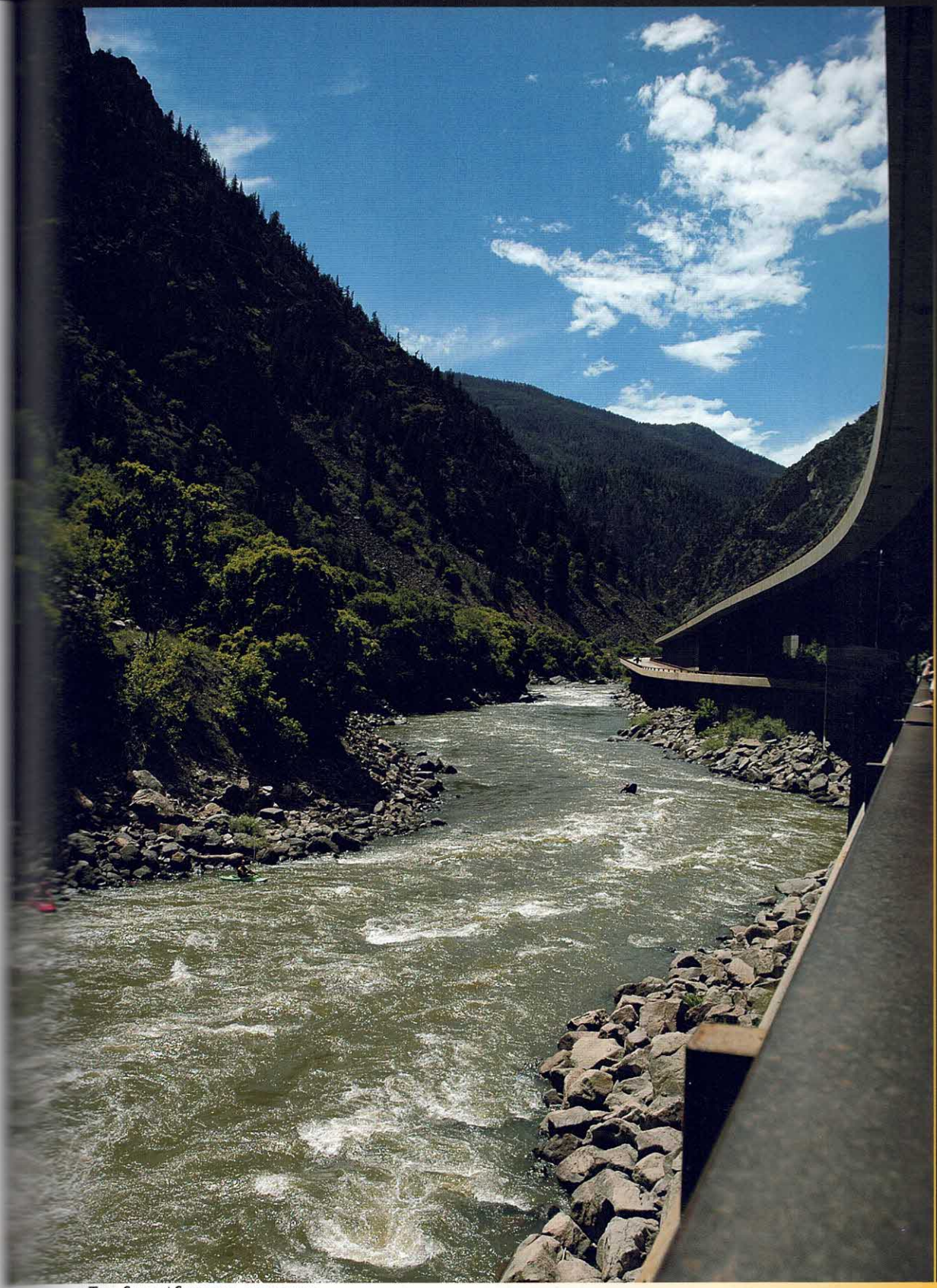
Despite the interruptions, I can't think of a prettier place to paddle that parallels both an interstate and the train tracks. The rest-area type exits, which serve as the river access points are park like and convenient, and shuttles are a breeze. Three sections can be found below the dam, and go from toughest to easiest in order of Barrel Springs, Shoshone, and Grizzly.

Barrel Springs

Although the big water days of Barrel seem to be long gone due to the controlled flows on this stretch (the most affected stretch here), Barrel still does offer some big water style each year. Lower flows create kind of a stompy creek feel, where the shallow boof line exists to skirt the deep and symmetrical holes found in the namesake rapid. As more water gets funneled through here the holes turn into big crashing waves, and rocks that were once on the shore become major threats as paddlers try to maintain control in the juicy whitewater.

Three rapids on the run—the always-big Upper Death, the affectionately ugly Life After Death, and the Barrel Springs rapid at the lower 2/3rds point of the run. Oh, and an artificial dam at the corner below Barrel, which should be snuck on the far left at high flow to avoid the burly hole. It's not bad in creek boats to go either route, but in a playboat (which I encourage you to bring for the pretty good play, and added benefit of linking in with Shoshone) the right-side hole is an automatic swim at certain levels. Upper Death is usually a portage. I've run it once, and portaged it 23 times. Those odds suggest at the intensity of this monster, a place where I've done my

Although the aesthetics of the two-tiered Interstate 70 will catch your eye first, the whitewater here is pretty good as it plunges from huge cascading drops to medium sized play, and fast flat.



Tina Swan ♦ Shoshone put-in view

biggest mystery move of all time. Do all scouting and/or portaging on the river right bike path, unless it's underwater.

Shoshone

Some people absolutely hate this section. It's true that it has its negatives, including put-in claustrophobia, very short-lived action, and somewhat poor wave and hole features. But, I thoroughly like this run as a novice training ground with the numerous eddies and rocks to learn to negotiate through and around, and the fantastic splat rocks for the advanced paddler to work on. It's like flatwater meets rock splats for .65 miles of combination ends. On the fly pourovers and eddy lines are okay as well.

Many of the rapids are named here, but only a few are worth mentioning. Good play can be found up top, and the best splat spots continue to the top of The Wall rapid. Fun boofs are on the right, and good on-the-fly play to the run out, with a huge eddy and sometimes sandbar, on river left. This is the halfway point.

The All-Day-Wave is next, but it is rarely at a level that is worth calling All Day. Sometimes it's great, but eddy access is tough, and best on surfer's right by hand crawling up the rocks. A fixed rope is sometimes placed here to aide in accessing this feature, which is mostly just a flat spinner with an occasional non-aerial blunt.

Tombstone is next with shallow play, a fun boof rock, and a straight diagonal line for beginners. A huge pool marks the entrance to Superstition, the biggest rapid of the run that will require a good brace. At ultra low flows below 750 the bottom left of this rapid has a fun hole with pretty good eddy access. A moving flat section delivers you to the take-out quickly.

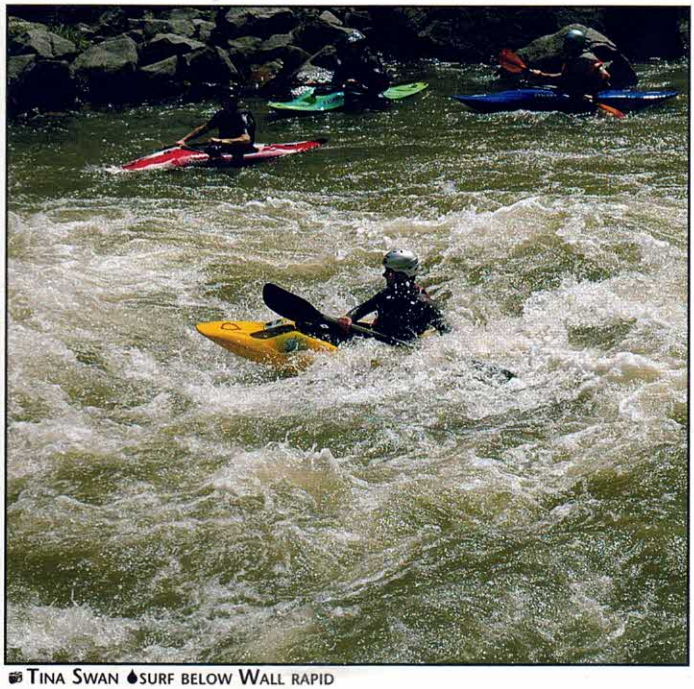
Grizzly to Two Rivers Park

A big notch easier than Shoshone, the river here is generally fast flat. A few mellow III's with easily avoidable holes reside here, creating excellent features for novice paddlers to play with. An optional lower put-in exists at the No Name exit, which is nice if the wave trains are big near the top (above 9000).

When the river bends back to I-70 downstream of the tunnel, look for the natural hot springs a ½ mile down on the left. These natural pools are only available at low flow, and a real treat to have on any run. A few more ripples take you through town. Be heads up for a few bridge abutments, and hopefully the addition of a whitewater park. Take out at Two Rivers Park on the left.

Grizzly Creek

This is a hiking trail that a few unlucky paddlers have mistaken as a kayak run at various times throughout Colorado's colorful boating history. In all seriousness this creek just does not run enough, nor get flossed enough to make the cut. We decided to mention it for the curious and because it is so close to the Shoshone run. If the Colorado at Shoshone is greater than 5,000 cfs, Grizzly might be a go. Scout while you hike a mile up the trail with your boat in tow to put on below an obvious sieve rock pile. If the creek is really high, the sieve becomes runnable and the initial rapid will have some punch (V+). The rest of the run is moderate class IV creeking at most flows, but at bankfull and higher the difficulty of certain sections coupled with the lack of good eddies above hazards can bump the run to V/V- territory.

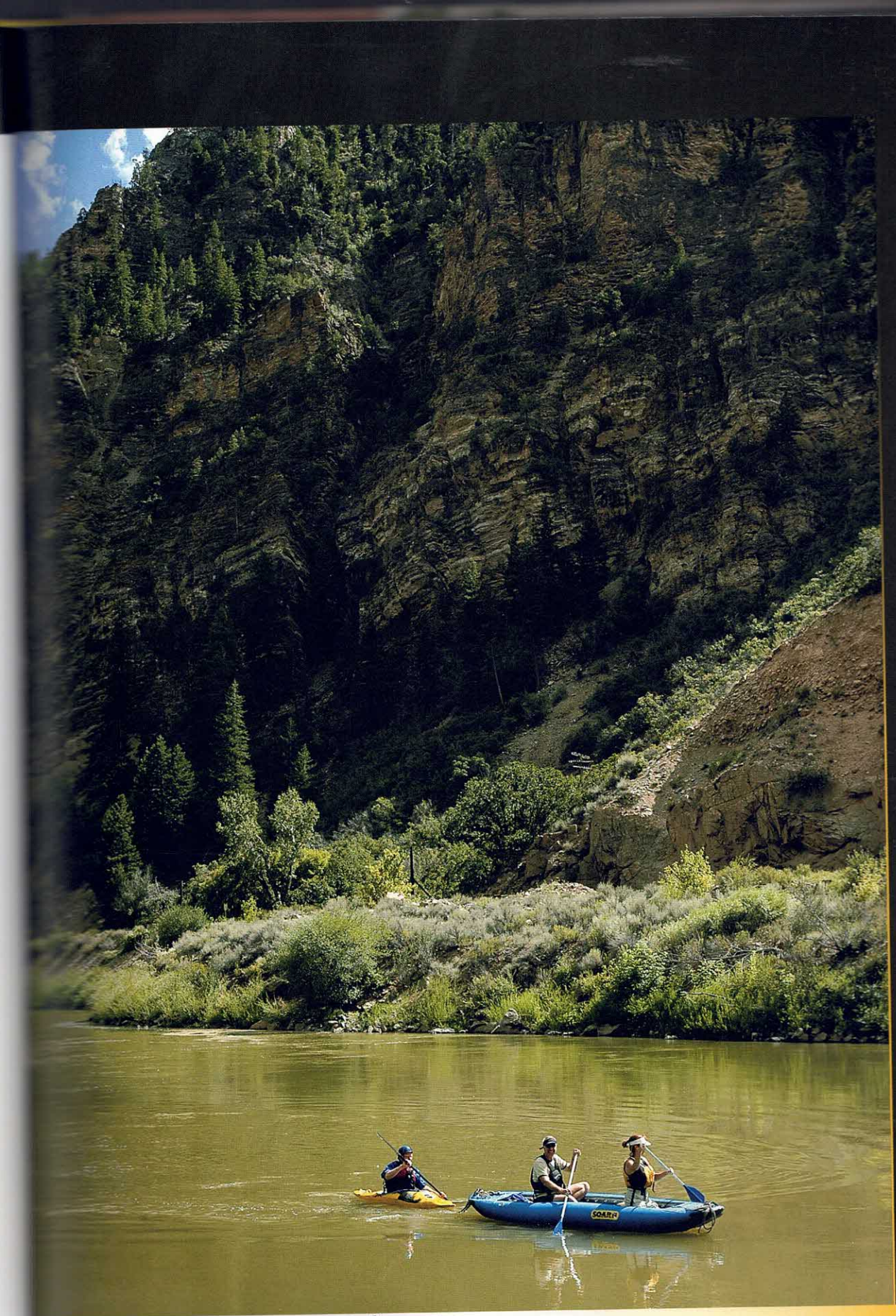


Tina Swan surf below Wall rapid

Directions

For Shoshone and Barrel, you will inevitably take out at Grizzly Creek Rest Area, exit 121. To put in for Shoshone use exit 123, and for Barrel use the Hanging Lake exit 125. Both of these put-ins require you to exit the interstate driving eastbound, and to get back onto the interstate driving westbound.

To reach the river access at No Name, take exit 119, turning towards the river, and then right down a residential road to a gravel pullout. There is a good lake here for instruction. The take-out at Two Rivers Park can be found by taking exit 116, turning left onto Hwy 6, and then turning left onto Devereaux Rd.



KM ♦LAZY SUNDAY AFTERNOON FLOAT DOWN GRIZZLY

Glenwood Town & Freestyle

Glenwood Springs is a growing little berg that seems to get overlooked, perhaps in part because the billionaires in Aspen are moving the millionaires down valley, with the end of the line being in Glenwood Springs. It's the real estate slum of the Roaring Fork valley, and it's pretty damn nice. The hot springs pool is okay, especially after an off-season paddling day in less than ideal weather, and a handful of Mexican, Italian, and old-school burger joints encourage some chill time before heading back home.

By the time you read this, G-Wood should have a new Nick Turner built whitewater park in place. The planned location is just below the confluence of the Colorado and Roaring Fork, and would be accessed from Two Rivers Park. Year round freestyle could be possible with an estimated 2000 cfs plus of average flow.

Roaring Fork Cemetery

CFS	500<min<800<best
Class	II+ (III)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	30 fpm
Length	6 miles
Season	April to August
Gauge	Roaring Frk @ G-Wood
Put-in	Hwy 82
Take-out	Two Rivers Park

This is the easiest run of the group, and the only one that really goes through town. Grizzly just parallels the interstate, where Cemetery offers a more intimate backyard cruise of Glenwood. Multiple put-in options exist, with the most popular being at the black bridge. This allows for the most warm-up before the signature rapid of this run, Cemetery (III) at the ¾ point. As you've likely discerned, it's next to the Glenwood Cemetery, where a few in-town bridges offer take-outs just below. For a day trip or longer afternoon, I recommend utilizing Two Rivers Park for the take-out. A few features in here offer some good beginner play if roll practice is in order.

Directions: For the Cemetery run exit Hwy 82 at mm 6.5, on the south side of Glenwood Springs. One mile down is the put-in bridge. If coming from Glenwood, there is a shortcut found by veering right near mile 5. The take out at Two Rivers Park can be found by taking Grand Ave through town and crossing over the river to the east side. Continue straight at the light, and turn left onto Devereaux Rd.

South Canyon

CFS	3000<prime<3600
Class	III+
Eddy	good, but crowded
Quality	★★★★★
Season	before and after peak
Gauge	CO Riv blw G-Wood
Riv Access	South Canyon Exit

Let there be blunts. And spins, carves, and the occasional donkey flip, pan am, or helix. But mostly just good aerial blunts, which is what this wave dishes up at levels of 3000 to 3600. Ideal is somewhere around 3250, but it tends to blow by all of these levels quickly on the way up and down. Even when the gauge says its good there are flushy in-between levels. If you are driving by, you won't need to check the gauge because there will be a huge conglomeration of paddlers parked here. It's usually possible to tell if it's good or not while driving by on the interstate. Don't get hit by the train when you go to scout.

Hot Springs: A hippy-dip style hot springs is about a mile up the road and on the right, but it is tight quarters, so try to hit it when others aren't, if you want to really spread out. Weeknights are your best bet.

Directions: South Canyon can be found at the SC exit, number 111 on I-70. River access can be found by turning right and driving down to river level, but go left and cross the bridge for the park-and-play.

Two Rivers Park Down

CFS	500<min<1k<best
Class	II+<2k<III- (III)
Quality	★
Gradient	15 fpm
Length	9.8 miles
Season	year round, no ice
Gauge	CO Riv blw G-Wood
Put-in	Two Rives Park
Take-out	Tibbett's Pullout

This is big water II+. It isn't very scenic, nor is the whitewater that quality. It's too mellow for the majority of paddlers, and beginners who would benefit the most from the II+ difficulty tend to feel a bit overwhelmed in the swollen current. But, it is there, and it is convenient. South Canyon rates as a solid III for rafters due to a bridge abutment that becomes an obstacle at levels of 2000 cfs plus. The only other notable obstacle is the train bridge a few miles further downstream. The scenery improves for the better after South Canyon.

Directions: Put in at Two Rivers Park (see above). Charca exit 109 and Tibbett's Pullout (accessible only from EB lanes, U-turn at exit 105) are the two lower take-outs of the beginner run.

Let there be blunts. Spins, carves, and the occasional Donkey Flip, Pan Am, or Helix are good too. But mostly just good aerial blunts. Oh, and maybe a beginner run and hot springs for your spouse.

Mark Cohen 🚶 Ben Guska 💧South Canyon Wave

Green River Park

Interstate 80 is a lonely, desolate place as it crosses through the arid plains of southern Wyoming. Precipitation is low here, and the landscape is rather dull, despite passing over the continental divide twice between Rawlins and Rock Springs, through an area known as the Great Divide Basin. Paddlers passing through here are mid-way through the suffering of a long and at times nearly unbearable drive, with little except semi trucks, trailer parks, and occasional road construction to fill the vacant scenery. Although the greatest of paddling trips are created by the journey more than the destination, I-80 through Wyoming will force the foot to the floorboard, as the mind desperately longs for the end.

And then, without warning or sane reason, interstate signage appears near Green River, Wyoming, announcing of all things holy—the Green River Whitewater Park. There are only two obvious features, and the quality varies greatly by offering a friendly loop-hole at times and a big fishing eddy at others. As the first sign passes, the thought of spending the next few hours with stiff forearms and a cramped back provokes a freestyle pit-stop. The decision to continue without at least looking to check if the park is kicking would be regretted. If nothing else, it's an excuse to get gas again and stock up on life necessities, like ice cream sandwiches.

The park is easy to find from either exit with street signage to direct the lost. From the main parking area on The Island, the Castle Hole is shortly downstream. This is generally the best feature, and a relatively good indicator of how good the features will be at any given level. If inner tubing looks mellow, then continue on to the next destination. If kayaking looks good, check out Powell's Plunge upstream, or the other two features on the far (1/8 mile up or down) ends of the park. Or just gear up for the freestyle action sans the additional scout.

I never really bother to check the levels, since I will never plan on spending an entire weekend just for kayaking in Green River, unless it's for the annual competition and subsequent water release that occurs at the end of August. The town's hospitality is top-notch, as dirt-bag kayakers are welcomed and encouraged to indulge in the shrimp cook-off dinner, camp in the parking lot, and to session the feature at night with bonfires (in a fire ring) set up on both banks of the river. By far some of the most fun I've ever had at a competition.

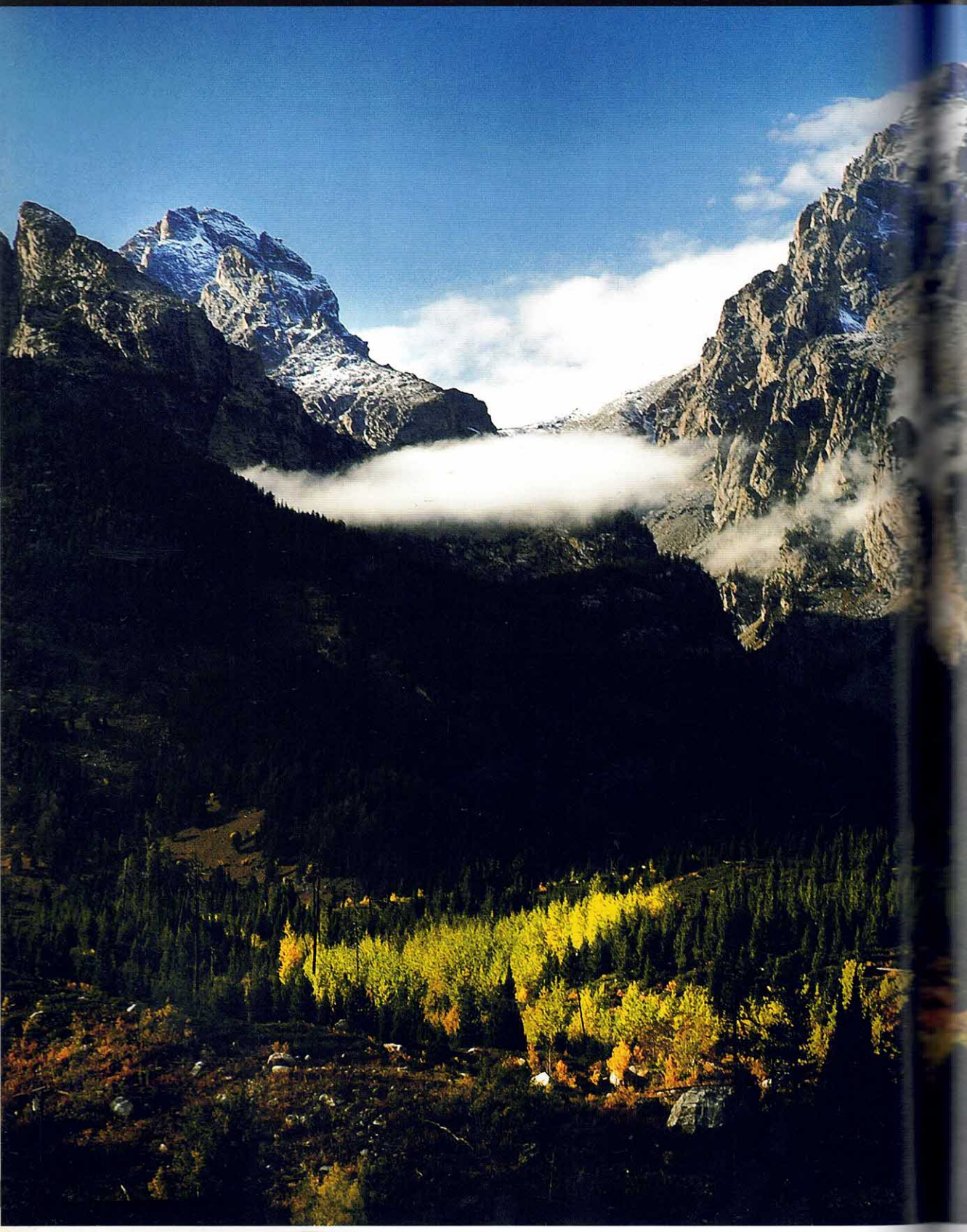
CFS	700<maybe? 1600<probably?
Class	III-
Eddy	excellent
Quality	★★★★
Length	park & play
Season	driving season
Gauge	Green Riv @ GR, WY
Riv Access	Expedition Island Park

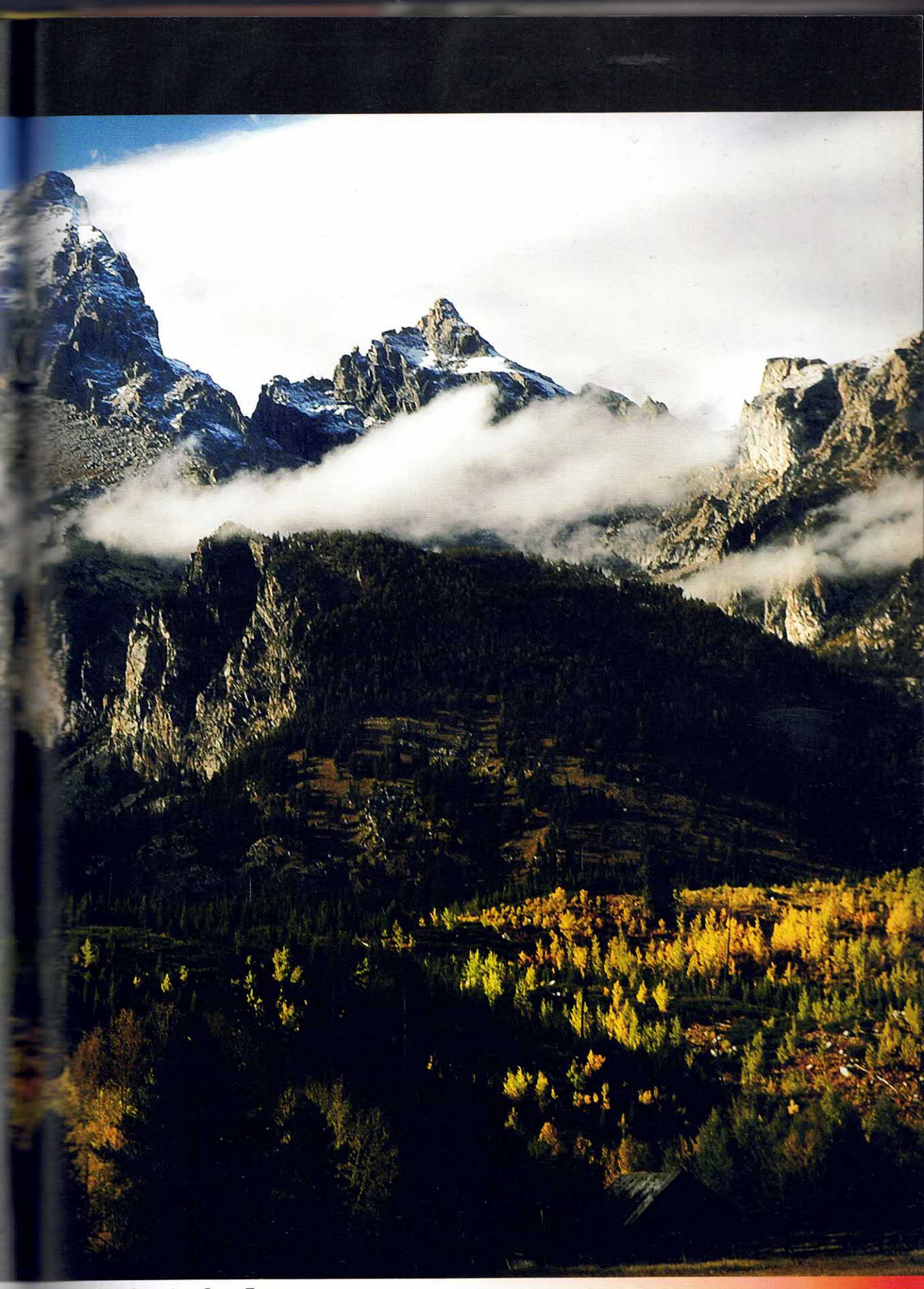
When not attending the festival, I'll settle for checking the status visually while driving through, since the quality seems to vary with the presence or absence of large concrete blocks that are placed into the river with a backhoe. A group of us once arrived in-time to instruct the equipment operator where to put the temporary blocks to form the best feature, and then watched as the combination of the water and the blocks created something from nothing. A more permanent redesign at some point could up the quality, since flows of 700 cfs are common even late in the season.

Directions: Find Green River, WY on a map. From exit 91, take Flaming Gorge Way into town, then head south on Hwy 530 (Uinta Dr). Take an immediate right, then a left further down where the obvious Expedition Island Park sign rests. Exit 89 works as well, and is near a good 60's diner.

Adam Welch/adamwelch.net Corey Volt just a simple hand loop

Without warning or sane reason, interstate signage appears near Green River, announcing of all things holy—the Green River Whitewater Park.





Tony Czech ♦ the Grand Tetons

Snake River Sections

Jackson Hole is one of the best destinations for beginner, novice and intermediate kayakers in the Rockies. More than eighty miles of class I+ to IV whitewater from Yellowstone to Alpine Junction welcome those that want to learn on a scenic, easily accessible river that runs year round. While deep snow and sub-zero temperatures do inhibit winter boating, it is not uncommon to see avid boaters out on winter days when temperatures rise above freezing.

There are nine distinct sections of the Snake River, although other put-in and take-out options exist. These sections are enjoyed by all river running craft and the numerous river access points are desirable to floaters looking for shorter runs and on the lower stretches, to get the best freestyle the area has to offer at any given level. The following is a break down of the common river sections of the Snake River. Be sure to check out the park-and-play descriptions on the following pages for the freestyle inclined—or is that inverted.

S. Yellowstone Boundary to Highway 89 Bridge (no beta box)

Despite the noblest of efforts, whitewater kayaking remains illegal in Yellowstone Park. However, there is a short stretch of Class III whitewater immediately south of the Park Boundary. The Snake flows into a tight little canyon and as the water moves fairly fast look out for wood at high water. It is easy to scout from the trail on the west side of the river. An overhanging cliff marks the main rapid and the exit to the canyon. From there it is a mellow float to the bridge. The entire run is three miles and the USGS gauge is the Snake River above Jackson Lake. This run needs water to have whitewater and at flows below 4,000 cfs it is Class II. On a good year whitewater happens from mid-May to mid-June and levels can exceed 10,000 cfs. A ten mile scenic float can be added to this by meandering into Jackson Lake and taking out at Lizard Creek. Paddling on the lake requires a park permit, see below.

Directions: Driving north from Grand Teton Park the highway enters the John D. Rockefeller Memorial Parkway and descends to the Snake River at the old site of Flagg Ranch. This bridge is the take-out. Put in at the picnic area 2.5 miles north, just outside the Yellowstone boundary.

Grand Teton National Park (three sections, no beta box)

There are three sections that are entirely in the park and require a park boat permit. Permits are available at the Moose Visitor Center for $10/week or $20/season as of 2007. From Jackson Lake Dam to Pacific Creek is the famous, 4.5 mile Oxbow Bend stretch. The water is totally flat and there are many channels to explore with good opportunities to see moose and other wildlife. Below Pacific Creek the Snake moves away from the highway and starts picking up volume and gradient. The braided river flows quickly over shallow and smooth cobbles with occasional deep pools.

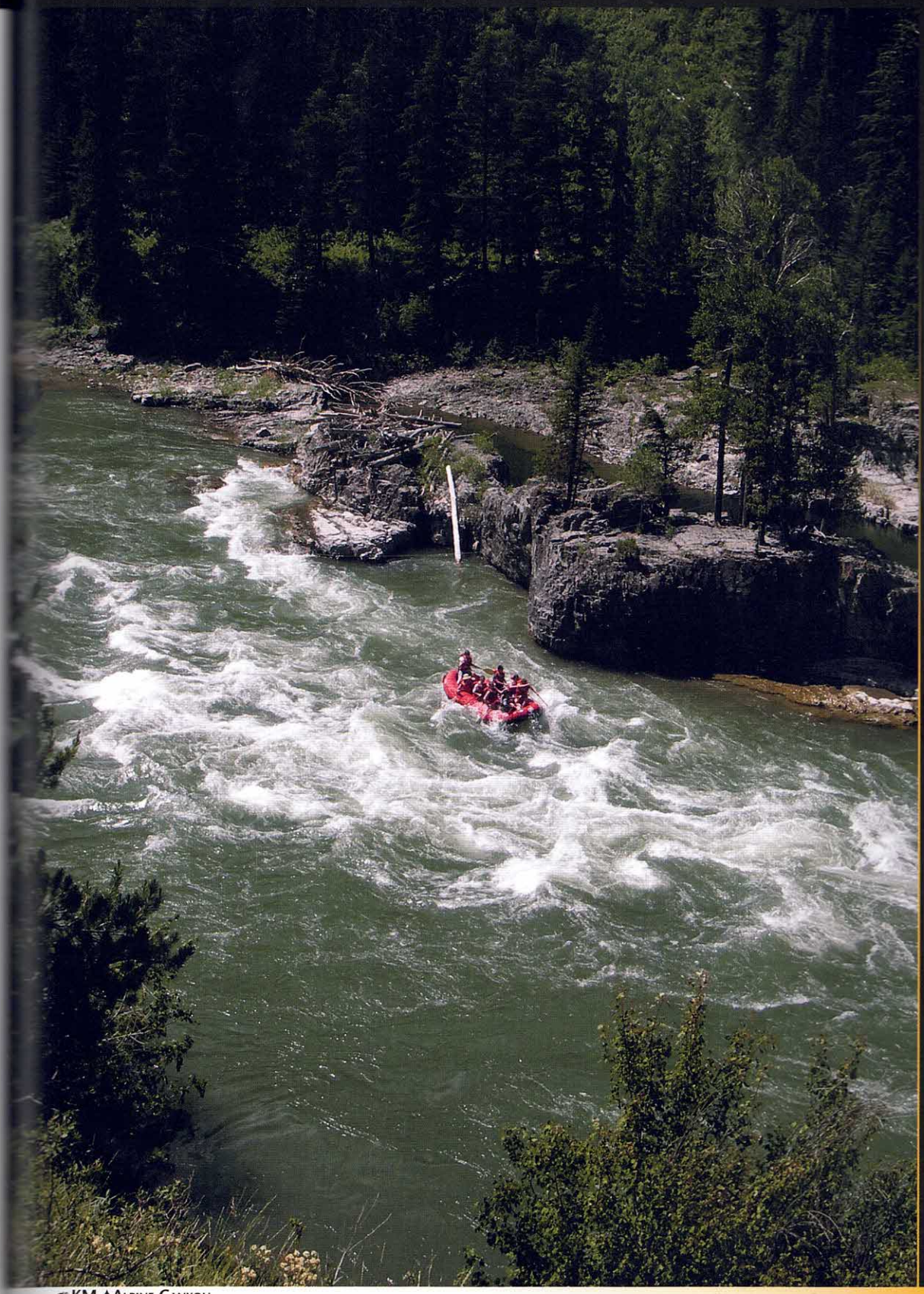
Though the road is never far away, the river has a wilderness feel as well as spectacular views of the Teton Range. Pacific Creek to Deadman's Bar is an 11 mile float and from Deadman's to Moose is 10 miles. The Snake is free to make its own way and floaters must beware as channels change, log jams occur and dead end channels exist. Ask at the Moose Visitor center for current conditions. Because of the potential for snags, fresh beginners who want current are best off below South Park Bridge.

Directions: It is easiest to reach all the Grand Teton sections from Hwy 89/191 on the east side of the Snake. From Jackson, drive north 12 miles on Highway 89/191 and turn left at Moose Junction. Cross the river and immediately turn right, following the signs to the boat ramp.

To reach Deadman's Bar continue on 89/191 past Moose 8.7 miles and turn left at the Deadman's Bar access road. The access road is dirt with one steep hill and may be difficult to negotiate in wet or snowy conditions.

To reach Pacific Creek continue north from Moose on 89/191. 18 miles north of Moose turn left at Moran Junction and enter the Park. An entry fee is required. Pacific Creek river access is a left turn a 1/2-mile after the Park entry. For Jackson Lake Dam, continue another 3.5 miles up the road, turn left and then left again before crossing the dam.

More than eighty miles of class I+ to IV whitewater welcome those that want to learn on a scenic, easily accessible river that runs from March through November.



Jackson • Snake River Sections

KM ♦Alpine Canyon

Moose Visitor Center to Wilson Bridge (no beta box)

This 14-mile section begins in the Park, and a boat permit is still required (see above). The river continues to flow at a good pace over smooth cobbles and through shallow braided channels with occasional deep pools. The character of this run is similar to the sections above until just below Moose when riverside houses appear. A few miles below the system of dikes begins and the river flows between them for most of the remainder of this run. It is still a wide and fairly pristine section. Because of the potential for snags, un-escorted beginners are better off below South Park Bridge.

Directions: To get to the take-out, head west on Hwy 22 from Jackson, and turn right on Hwy 390 after crossing over the bridge. Take the first right onto a gravel road that leads to the river. To get to the put-in drive north on Hwy 390 for 9 miles, passing by Teton Village, and turn right at the Moose Visitor Center. Vehicles pulling trailers are required to use Hwy 191 through Jackson—follow directions to Moose as listed previously.

Wilson Bridge to South Park Bridge (no beta box)

The Snake continues below Wilson Bridge in much the same fashion as described previously. No permit is required, the views of the mountains remain excellent, and there is still great wildlife viewing. This stretch is particularly outstanding for birding as eagles, pelicans, herons and more all fish this stretch. Dikes continue to control the spread of the river and speed up the water to create interesting currents. Because of the potential for snags, un-escorted beginners are better off below South Park Bridge.

Directions: The put-in is at Wilson Bridge. To get to the take-out, return to Jackson and drive south on Hwy 191/89 for seven miles, turning hard right immediately before South Park Bridge, which is the first one south of Jackson.

South Park Bridge to Snake River Canyon Ranch

This is the famous Pole, Pedal, Paddle stretch and the very best section for beginners on the Snake near Jackson. At South Park the braided nature of the Snake ends and the river flows in one channel with few exceptions down to Alpine. The water is deep and smooth, eddy lines are well defined and there are few better runs for beginners to hone their skills. At higher flows (above 10,000 cfs) King's Wave is in and the constrictions and eddy lines below Hoback get pushy. This makes for great eddy line fun with mystery move potential but paddlers at their limit should take out at Hoback Junction. This shortens the run by 4 miles. It is also possible to take out a mile below Hoback at King's Wave park-and-play spot. This makes a great stretch for varying abilities as the big eddy at King's is a reasonable exit spot and more advanced boaters can surf there for hours. Check out the King's wave beat in the freestyle section.

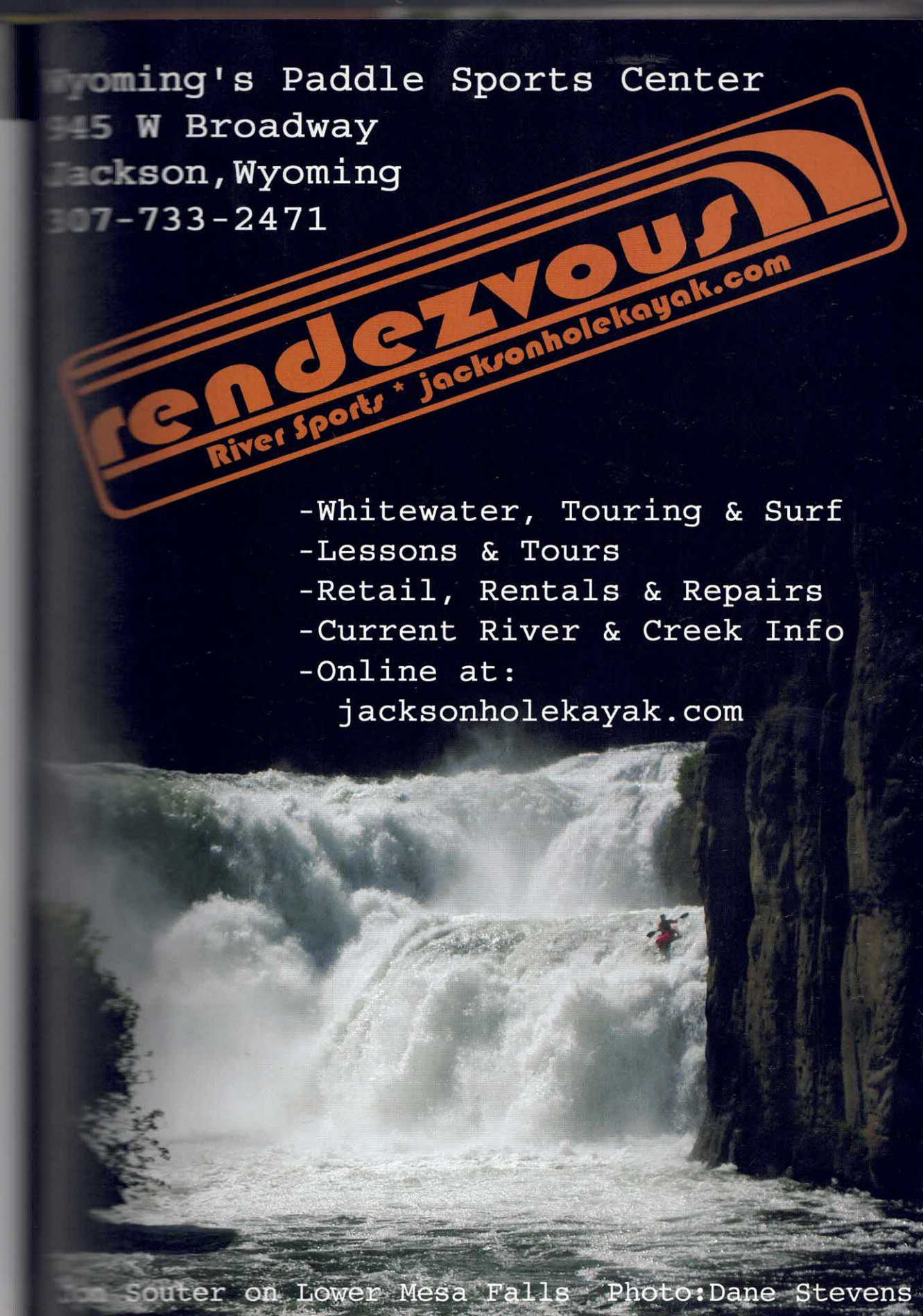
CFS	500<min 1000<optimal<30k
Class	II
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	12 fpm
Length	9 miles
Season	all year
Gauge	Snake Riv @ Alpine
Put-in	South Park Bridge
Take-out	Snake River Cyn Ranch

Directions: The put-in is at the South Park Bridge, seven miles south of Jackson or as an alternative put-in on the Hoback River at the Hoback take-out. At this time there is no public access right at Hoback on the Snake River, a ¼ mile upstream there is a steep road to the river on forest service land. Don't try driving all the way to the river without high clearance. To get to the take-out, drive south on Hwy 89 from Hoback Junction and in three miles look out for a left turn lane with a boat ramp sign. This turns into the forest service access on river right. If you are still on 89 at the Snake River Canyon Ranch Bridge turn around and go back.

Wyoming's Paddle Sports Center
945 W Broadway
Jackson, Wyoming
307-733-2471

rendezvous
River Sports * jacksonholekayak.com

-Whitewater, Touring & Surf
-Lessons & Tours
-Retail, Rentals & Repairs
-Current River & Creek Info
-Online at:
jacksonholekayak.com



Tom Souter on Lower Mesa Falls Photo:Dane Stevens

Snake River Sections

Snake River Ranch to East Table Boat Ramp

More scenic, easily accessible class I-II as the river meanders parallel to Hwy 89 offering easy escape to the road. There is one fun rapid, County Line Waves. This is a friendly wave train with a big mid-stream boulder and a great eddy. Other take out options include Elbow Boat Ramp or continuing down to West Table. This is generally the least popular stretch, making it a good run to avoid the crowds on the busy weekends.

Directions: Put-in at Astoria or a mile below at Pritchard. Take out at the well-marked East Table Boat Access (no ramp) or a bit further downstream at West Table Boat Ramp (13 miles from Hoback Jct.). Both areas are accessed from left turns when driving south on Hwy 89. When at West Table, be sure to use the second boat ramp (non-commercial) or the small boat area immediately downstream.

CFS	4500<optimal<20k
Class	I
Quality	★★
Gradient	10 fpm
Length	9.5 miles
Season	all year
Gauge	Snake Riv @ Alpine
Put-in	Snake River Cyn Ranch
Take-out	East Table Boat Ramp

Alpine Canyon

This is the most popular stretch of the Snake River, both because it has the biggest whitewater (sections of IV at higher levels), which attract paddlers of all abilities and commercial raft trips, and because it features all but one of the famous freestyle features of the area. On a mid-summer day be prepared for crowds, and stay calm and considerate when dealing with them.

Locals will tell you that there is always at least one feature that is running in this eight-mile stretch. If you are willing to float the entire section you'll find great downriver play. At flows below 10,000 cfs novices that paddle hard can enjoy the big water of this run. The waves are fun and forgiving, the eddies are big and allow for reasonable swimmer and gear collection. Levees of 10,000-12,000 cfs are widely considered the best level for maximum fun in Alpine Canyon. At these flows the river begins to get some push. While running down the middle generally works at all flows, higher water turns the eddy lines a bit mean and there are seams that can cause serious downtime. More water increases this phenomenon but also washes out several of the better features. At very high flows, 25,000+ cfs, the river is full of moving debris and several huge surf waves exist. Running Alpine at high flows gives boaters a taste of big water in a fairly friendly setting. One hazard to note is Three-Oar-Deal—a dangerous hydraulic that forms above 13,000 cfs three miles below West Table on river left. For those looking for more action, continue below Sheep Gulch and run the Narrows. At flows above 18,000 cfs this constriction packs a Class V punch and at lower flows it has the best rapids on the river with great waves and seams. The Narrows is flooded when Palisades Reservoir is roughly above 60% full. It is easy to see the obvious constriction visually from 89, a mile below Sheep Gulch.

CFS	500<min<2000<low 4500<optimal<11k
Class	III (III+ x3)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	20 fpm
Length	8 miles
Season	all year
Gauge	Snake Riv @ Alpine
Put-in	West Table Boat Ramp
Take-out	Sheep Gulch

Directions: Put-in at West Table Boat Ramp, a well signed access 13 miles below Hoback Jct. To reach the take-out, drive south on Hwy 89 for eight miles, and turn left at the Sheep Gulch Boat Ramp. There is a rough fishing access trail below the Narrows and good parking at a turn out approximately a ½ mile above Alpine. The official lower take out is on river right immediately below the bridge in Alpine.

-Aaron Pruzan (all of Snake River)

Brook Aitken ♦57' Chevy shuttle rig

Tony Czech ♦ the lineup, one of the greatest places to be, Snake River Freestyle

Jackson Hole Freestyle

The Snake River is the only true freestyle destination in the Rocky Mountains that is covered in this book. Although many features in the Rockies offer up the sickest, most amazing freestyle maneuvers possible, few of the areas can boast the number of top-notch features that Jackson Hole lays host to (although the Ark & Animas come close). The locals will tell you that at almost any level there is a good play feature. This makes for a very long freestyle season for paddlers that are willing to make the trip. Access is straightforward along Hwy 89, and the sunny days are welcoming for a multi-session day, interspersed with lunch and riverside lounging. Every feature except Kings Wave is located within the Alpine Canyon section and the variety of great features make a freestyle trip here easy to plan, regardless of the chosen weekend or level. Best of all, prime levels occur late in the season.

Kings Wave

This is the most infamous high water feature of the area, with prime flows beginning at 10k. When Kings is good the high water forms an extremely wide and muddy river—so powerful that you can hear the rocks rolling down the river bottom. With Class II water above and below, eddy access, its own parking area with trail, and very close proximity to Jackson, King's Wave is very popular and can be crowded after work and on weekend days. King's Wave surges and changes constantly. Big wave moves are the norm, big loops are also possible. Because the river is very wide, optimal flows can vary depending on the movement of river rock in the area. There are times when King's is outstanding at 17,000 and there are times that it is flat at 15,000. Keep in mind that if flows on the Snake are that high there is super fun downriver play on both the Hoback River and Alpine Canyon. An excellent longer play run is to put in 2.5 miles up the Hoback and paddle down to King's.

CFS	10k<optimal<17k
Class	III+
Eddy	excellent
Quality	★★★★
Season	May, June
Gauge	Snake Riv @ Alpine
Riv Access	Hwy 89 pull-off

Note: Everyone will notice from the highway Fall Creek as it plunges off a 15-footer upstream from King's Wave. This creek runs through private property and running it is not recommended. If you go please follow a few rules—don't park there; scouting is trespassing so either follow someone who knows the line or don't run it; at high flows make a strong boof or you will swim in a powerful hole; don't cross private land to access the creek (the drops upstream of the highway are illegal). Please don't mess things up by disrespecting these rules.

Directions: Head south of Hoback Jct exactly one mile on Hwy 89, and park in the small parking lot. This is also a great take out for the lower Hoback.

Station Creek

When the stickiness of Taco gets too sticky there is a great hole a 1/2-mile upstream. This is a sleeper feature in a wide section and many paddlers cruise right by without even noticing. Station Creek is easy to see from above as there is a large rock with many logs pinned to it on river left. Every freestyle manuever is possible. This is a friendly feature and a great place to learn moves as the hole flushes quickly and there is a huge eddy below. The only drawback is the feature is a little shallow.

CFS	5k<optimal<6k
Class	III
Eddy	excellent
Quality	★★★
Season	May to August
Gauge	Snake Riv @ Alpine
Riv Access	Hwy 89 pull-off

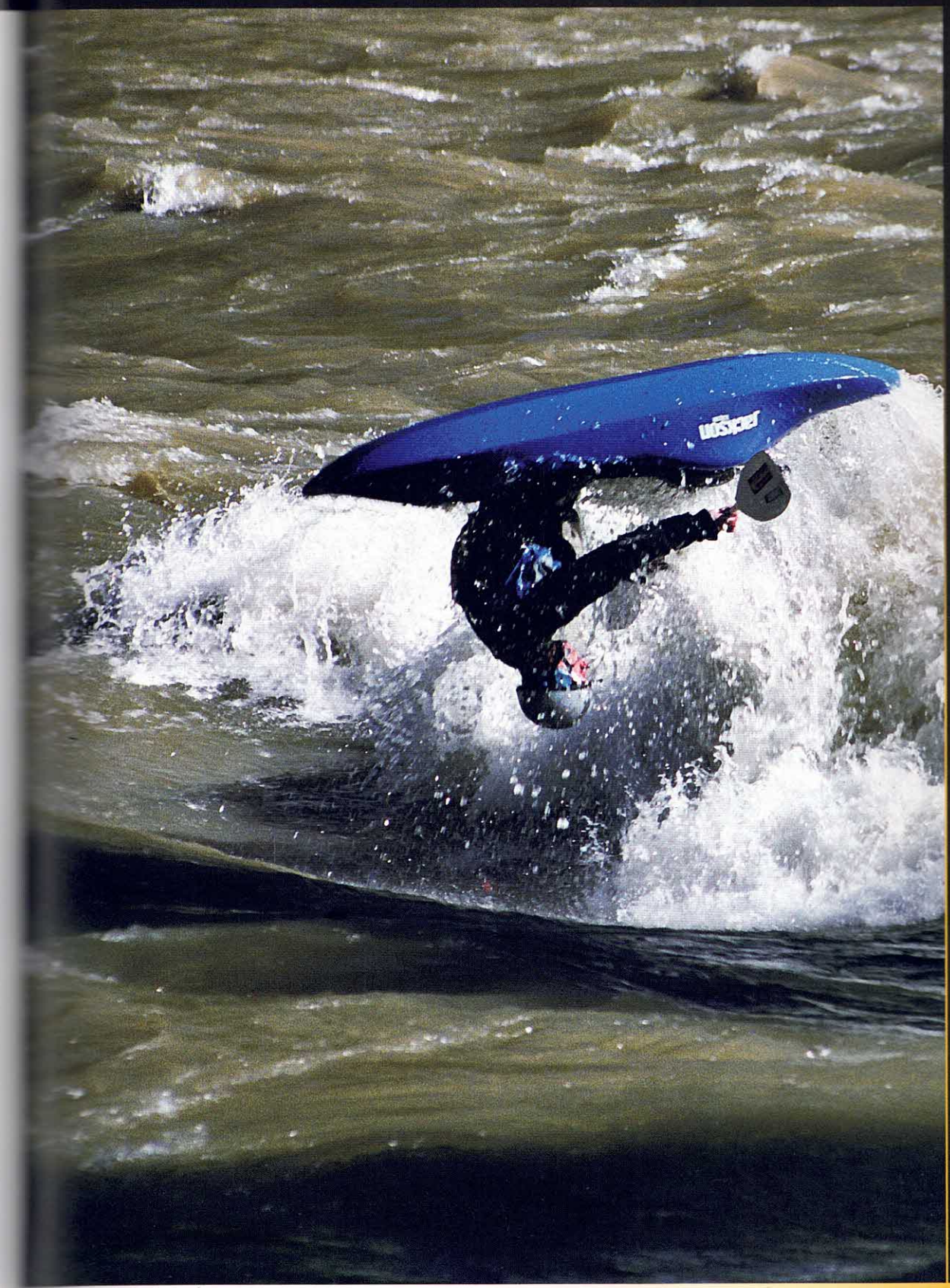
Directions: Put in at West Table Boat Ramp off Hwy 89. Station Creek Hole is a 1/2-mile downstream. Don't use the campground for access.

Burrito & Taco

Wrapping up a handful of spicy freestyle, Burrito and Taco share the same rock outcropping in the top half of the Alpine Canyon. Access here is superb, and both holes have very sticky, prime, and flushy or non-existent levels. Catch the holes at prime levels, and the features dish out big loop variations. Taco contains the easily avoidable Dark Side of stickiness, which one local actually likes because, "It holds you like a good lover—there's no getting out until you are out of breath." Swims happen here, and remembering to dive deep will prevent potentially fatal recirculation.

Ryan Rennegar ♦ Kings Wave

Although many features in the Rockies offer up the sickest freestyle maneuvers possible, few of the areas can boast the number of top-notch features that Jackson Hole lays host to.



Carson King ♗ Will Taggart ♦ Camel Hump at 18,000 cfs

The eddy access is the best of the area, and the scene alive and well. Expect light crowds and enjoy the social scene and top-notch play.

Directions: There is a parking area and trail to the water about two miles below West Table Boat Ramp, on Hwy 89. It is the first paved turn out below West Table. Please use existing trails.

CFS	2200<Burrito<3600 6k<Taco<7k
Class	III+ Burrito IV- Taco
Eddy	good
Quality	★★★★★
Season	Varies April to Oct
Gauge	Snake Riv @ Alpine
Riv Access	Hwy 89 pull-off

Big Kahuna & Lunch Counter

Two features in a mere ½-mile create the standard wave play of Alpine Canyon. Lunch Counter is the best known feature in the area. With its flat basalt shelves it is a great hang out and is quite a beach party scene on a hot summer day. The Counter was an early spot for board surfing on a river (1976) and there are often more surfers than kayakers. Early planing-hull kayaks ruled (and still rule) at Lunch Counter as they could surf both the front and the back wave. Photos of perfect blunts trickled out of the region, captivating the mind of the freestyle crowd—culminating with a huge rodeo in 2001. Short boats have tainted the luster of this feature, since the back wave is too fast for modern freestyle designs and at times the hike-only front wave is also. Still, boaters in faster kayaks are going huge at the Counter when the wave is well formed, generally 10,000-12,500 cfs. When the Snake rises quickly (1,000 cfs/day or more) the wave tends to flatten out and Lunch Counter almost always has better shape when river levels are falling.

Big Kahuna lies just upstream of Lunch Counter, and is also a hike-to surf, though it is easy to set up rope eddy access. Pan ams, donkey flips, and helixes are all attainable with the amount of air this feature dishes out. Big Kahuna is the best lower-water wave of the area, with ideal flows often occurring into late August or September.

CFS	4000<Kahuna<5500 6500<Lunch<12500
Class	III+
Eddy	poor, hike-and-surf
Quality	★★★★★
Season	April to July
Gauge	Snake Riv @ Alpine
Riv Access	Hwy 89 pull-off

Directions: The parking area is well-marked from Hwy 89, 2.7 miles upstream of the Sheep Gulch turnoff. Big Kahuna is reached from a dirt offshoot that heads upstream from the view point trail that starts near the public restroom. The Lunch Counter trail starts at the downstream edge of the parking area and switchbacks down to the river. Please use existing trails and take your trash with you when you leave.

Big Friendly Giant

This is an awesome big trick wave in the narrows between Sheep Gulch and the Palisades. Due to its location it requires low levels at Palisades Reservoir (roughly 60% or less) to even have a shot at being in. When Kahuna starts to go out, the BFG usually starts to come in. It is worth extending the Alpine Canyon run to see if its in. Look for the feature in the middle of a rapid with a disorderly set of waves just above the actual Narrows. It does not have eddy access, but there are generally two other waves that can be reached from an eddy. The hike is on the right shore and is painless. What this wave lacks in eddy service it makes up for in air time. As the name suggests, it is a pretty good size wave and it is pretty friendly as far as big waves go. After feeling it out for a couple of rides, long bouncy surf sessions can be had and it can really begin to feel like a nice overhead set—at least when you are seated in a kayak. Rendezvous' Jackson Hole Kids Club members crush this wave, and the rest of the area freestyle. If you can find one of them you are sure to find the epic freestyle of the Snake.

CFS	low lake<optimal<4k
Class	III+
Eddy	no
Quality	★★★★
Season	August to September
Gauge	Snake Riv @ Alpine
Riv Access	Sheep Gulch

-Aaron Pruzan (play descriptions)

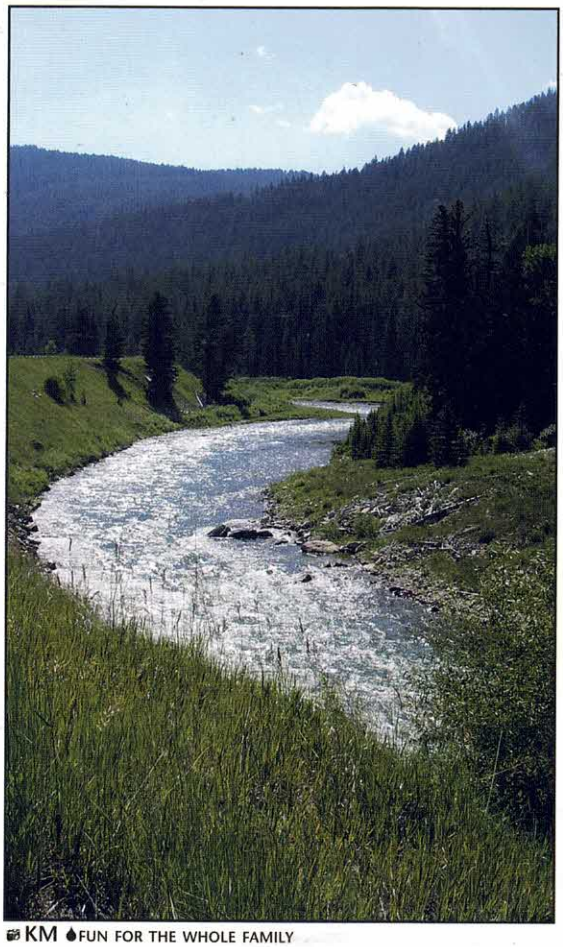
Benji Thunnel Will Taggart Looping Burrito

Jackson • Jackson Hole Freestyle

Hoback River

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Visual CFS	300	400	800	1600
Character	mellow	float	floatin' & boatin'	freestyle float
Class	II	III-	III	III+
Quality	★	★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	30 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good			
Length	13.1 miles			
Season	April to August			
Gauge	visual, but use Snake River @ Alpine for barometer			
Put-in	Hwy 191			
Take-out	Hoback Junction			

Winding its way west from Hoback Junction through many miles of old growth pine forest, the Hoback River still maintains a fantastic wilderness feel despite paralleling Hwy 191. The name alone stirs memories of lush pine trees that, unlike anywhere else that I've seen, grow from the river banks horizontally before bending upward to fight their way towards the sun in the dense growth. The vegetation is lush and the whitewater an excellent compliment to beginners looking to learn in a beautiful place.



In my first years of paddling I would come here with my parents, and test my eddy hoping and ferrying skills on the calm waters of the Hoback river, always willing to try new things with the added confidence of being able to retreat to the road should things go wrong. Eddies are plentiful, and the majority of the run is moving flatwater with an occasional III- rapid to navigate.

The twelve mile long run can make for a long day for the inexperienced, but multiple put-in and take-out options exist which allow for shorter runs or easier ways to combine the Hoback with a run on either Granite Creek up top, or the Snake River downstream. Higher flows up the difficulty to class III, and some good play features come in, as well as great wave trains to throw your way down. I enjoy combining the lower half of this run with a take-out at King's Wave when the levels cooperate.

Directions

Hwy 89 and 191 form a triangle of roadway at Hoback Junction, where the south side of the triangle has a dirt road that goes past Hoback River Resort, and down to the river. Park before the private bridge at the river right turnout, where you can take out. To get to the highest put-in, take Hwy 191 west for approximately 12 miles, and turn left onto Granite Creek Rd. Find a pull-out off the gravel road to park, and put-in on Granite Creek. Multiple put-in and take-out options exist off of highway 191. Keep in mind the take-out is on private land, as is the put-in for the lower run 2.5 miles up from the Junction. Please be respectful of this important access.

KM FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Winding its way west to Hoback Junction through many miles of old growth pine forest, the Hoback River still maintains a fantastic wilderness feel despite paralleling Hwy 191.

Jonathan Selkowitz ♗ Aaron, Brady, Scott, & Tamsen ♦Kids Club early days

Greys River & McCoy Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	521	1240	2280	5420
Character	green circle	blue square	blue black	black diamond
Class	III+	IV-	IV+	V-
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★
Gradient	55 fpm Lower, 40 fpm Upper			
Remoteness	roadside to a gravel road			
Hitchability	okay in summer			
Length	2.5 miles Lower, 4 miles Upper			
Season	April to October			
Gauge	Greys River above Reservoir			
Put-in	Greys River Road			
Take-out	Bridge Campground			

The Greys River is nestled in a stunning forested canyon that sees much less traffic than the National Parks to the north of Jackson. Free camping here is abundant and the run offers high-quality intermediate to advanced paddling for the whitewater junkie. The season is fairly long for this section, which dishes up III-IV whitewater depending on the level. There is one notable drop at the end, Snaggletooth, which is class V- at high water.

The faces of the Greys are very different with the seasons. The river is a raging brown torrent with few eddies at high flows and then becomes a fun, technical run with clear green water and lots of moves when the water is low. The Jackson Hole Kayak Club holds two events here, a downriver boater-cross during runoff and a whitewater slalom at the end of summer.

Lower

Starting at Squaw Creek campground will provide a relatively long warm-up before the first of the three distinct rapids. The whitewater increases in difficulty as paddlers make their way downstream, so bail to the river right road if trouble begins in any of the first drops. Snaggletooth is easily spotted from the road, and pre-scouting is best, especially with the lack of eddies at higher flows. Multiple lines are possible, with the preferred line being whichever one will keep you out of the large holes, off the rocks or out of the logs that are almost always pinned on the right side of this rapid.

Following Snaggletooth the river mellows with the exception of a nasty (but avoidable) hole at the last turn just above Bridge Campground. Recently there has been a river wide logjam at this turn but there is a take-out trail below the island after Snaggletooth and you won't miss any of the best rapids. To take-out above the log park at the turn-out on Greys River road just below Snaggletooth.

Upper

Paddlers looking for an easier stretch of whitewater, or just a longer run can put-in 4-miles upstream of the regular put-in at Lynx Creek. Class II floating gets interrupted by a III+ section, with a crux formed by a landslide. Scout on river left. Be heads up for wood throughout, but this section was clean in 2006.

Directions

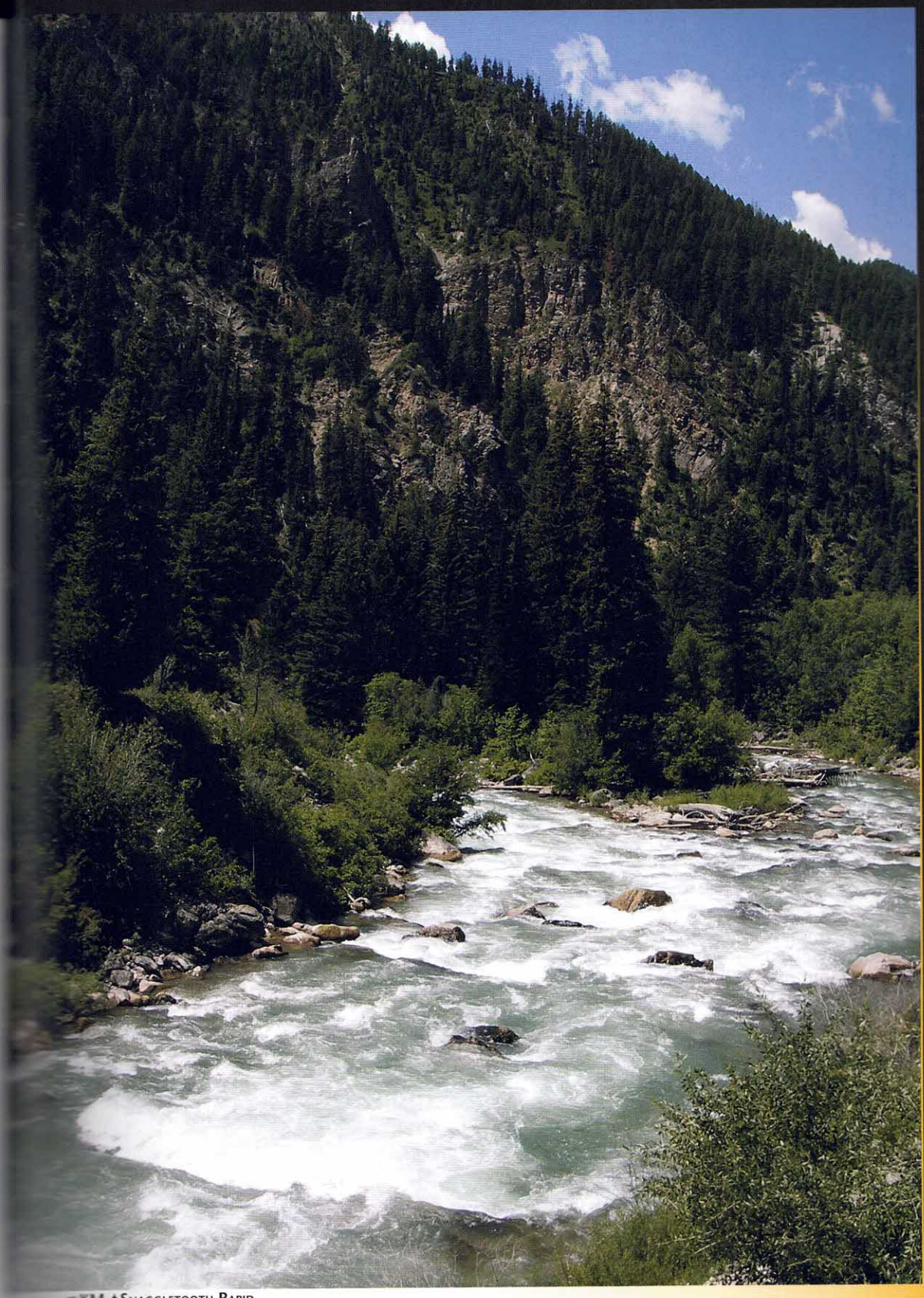
From Alpine Junction, take Greys River Road (FR 10138) out of town. It will soon turn to dirt, and when it crosses over the first bridge turn right into the Bridge Campground (the take-out). Continue on Greys River Road for 2.3 miles (scouting Snaggletooth at about the one mile point – please don't block the road) at Squaw Creek there is a bridge over the river and parking is available on either side. Please be courteous of other campers in the area.

McCoy Creek (no beta box)

If you are boating in the area and looking for other fun options for creeking, check out McCoy Creek on the South side of Palisades Reservoir. The Reservoir must be low to run this creek, and the lower the better. This 1/2-mile stretch is fun Class IV+ that drops from the road down into the res. The creek cuts its way through a mini-canyon that is an interesting moonscape since most of this terrain is often flooded. It is easy to pre-scout the entire stretch from river left. The shuttle is a walk back up to the put-in. To reach the run drive approximately 2 miles south from Alpine on Highway 89, turn left, the road will cross the Salt River and then heads north along the west side of the res. The put-in is five miles, at a high bridge.

-Aaron Pruzan

Free camping here is abundant for out-of-towners, and the Greys offers high quality intermediate paddling for the whitewater junkie.



KM ♦Snaggletooth Rapid

Granite Creek

Arguably just another great addition to the beginner paddling destination of Jackson Hole, Granite Creek's uniqueness as a low-volume, high-elevation float that is surprisingly free of wood warrants a must-do rating for paddlers about to run the Hoback. Draining the south side of the Gros Ventre wilderness, the lower 4.5 miles of Granite Creek are the most quality, although paddlers can choose to put-in as high up as the base of Granite Creek Falls to enjoy the roadside section of this creek in its entirety.

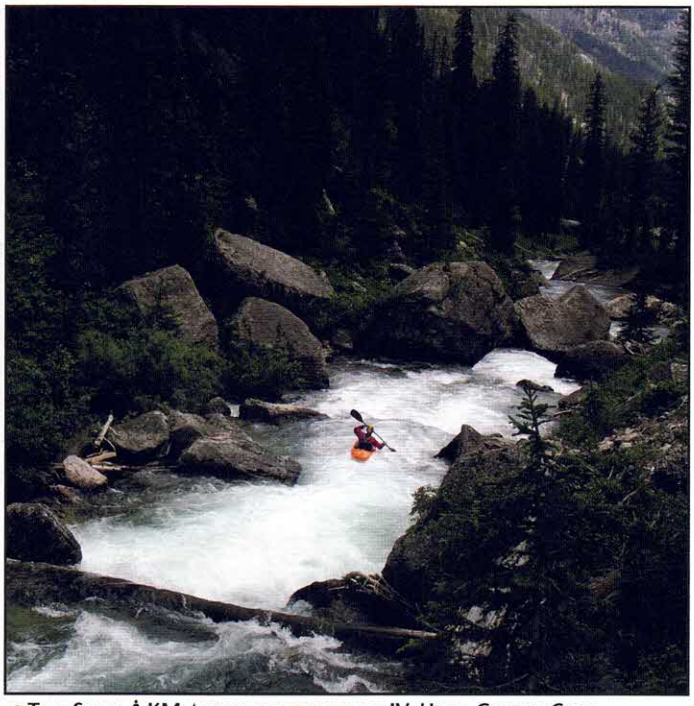
Although Granite Creek is shallow, making rolls uncomfortable, there are only a handful of features that are large enough to flip a paddler that has basic class III- skills. The crux of the run comes from a III+ boulder garden rapid just upstream from where the road crosses over Little Granite Creek at an out-of-place concrete bridge. I recommend putting in either directly above this drop to get the best action, or below and extending the run into the upper reaches of the Hoback. The best camping can be found just upstream of this bridge as well, but weekend crowds can get intense if you fail to stake your claim early. Expect to encounter slow-driving tourists and rude ranchers.

Directions: The take out is on Granite Creek Road, just upstream from the junction with Hwy 189/191. Multiple put-in options are available along the gravel Granite Creek Road, with the upper most put-in at the base of Granite Creek Falls. Check out the free hot springs about 50 yards downstream of the falls on river left.

CFS	200<min<300<best
Class	II (III)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	55 fpm
Length	9.1 miles
Season	April to July
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Granite Creek Road
Take-out	Hoback

Upper Granite Creek

Upper Granite Creek offers a good stretch of adventurous class III+ (with one IV- immediately above the take-out bridge) for those willing to hike their boat four miles up the trail from the public hot springs. An early put-in is available by taking the first trail to the left, or continue until spotting the river in a clearing through the trees. Hiking an extra steep mile will place paddlers above two other class IV drops, the second of which is an 8' vert. Although highly scenic, the amount of effort needed for the hike will prevent this section from ever being a classic.

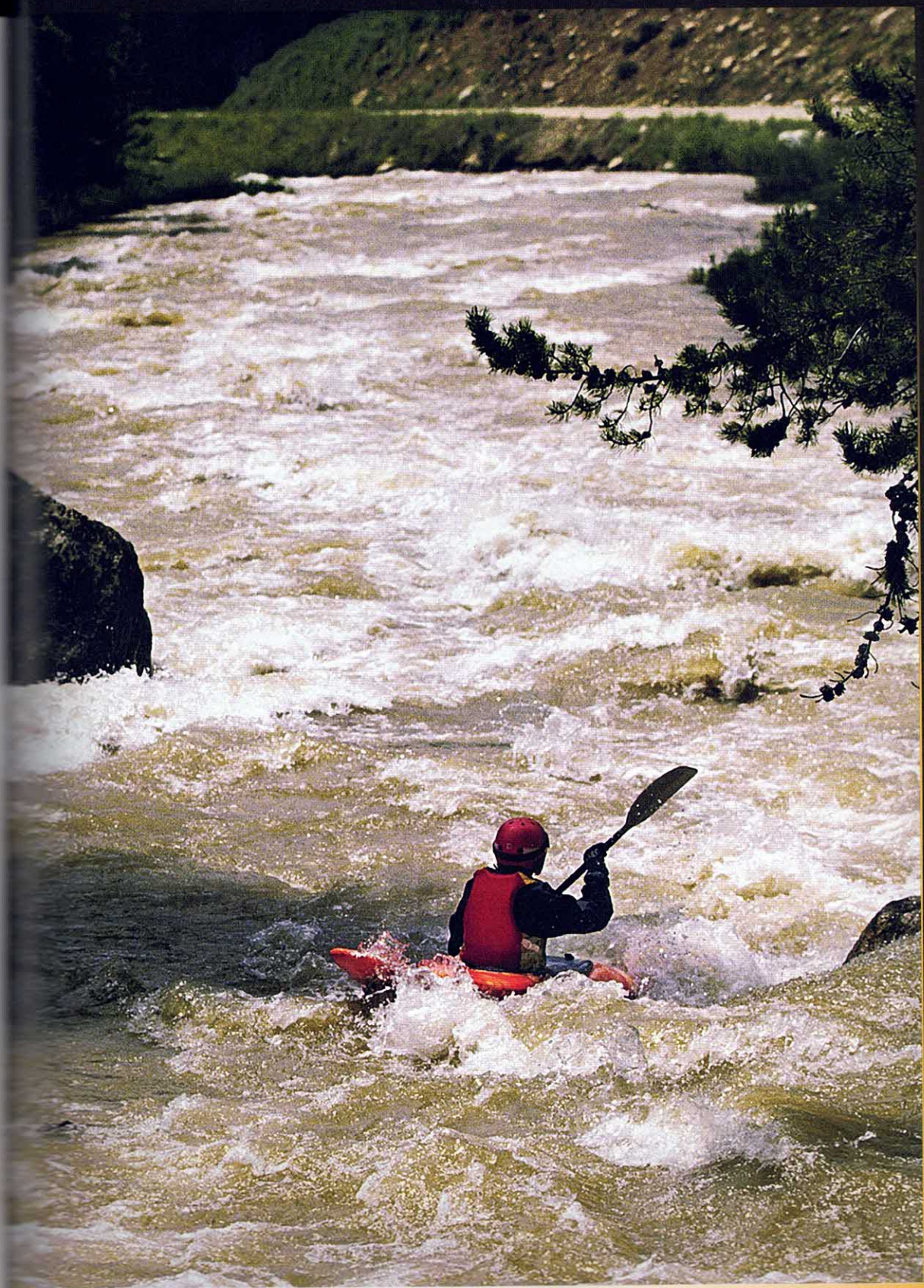


Tina Swan KM the first of the class IV, Upper Granite Creek

If must-make eddies aren't a concern, scout the section from the hot springs to the lip of Granite Creek Falls (NR). The falls has been run with poor results. It certainly doesn't look good to go. In 2006 this section was completely free of wood portages, but that could easily change as we boofed over two logs. I nearly stepped on a well-hidden bear cub while hiking there a few years ago. Be heads up for mama.

Directions: From Hoback Junction, take Hwy 189/191 east for 12 miles, and turn left onto Granite Creek Rd (the Hwy crosses the Hoback here). Follow the signs to the hot springs, which is above Granite Falls, about 10 miles up the road. Park at the parking area at the end of the road, and begin hiking.

CFS	150<min<250<best
Class	III+ (IVs)
Quality	★★
Gradient	140 fpm
Length	4 miles (variable)
Season	May, June, July
Gauge	visual
Put-in	TR 018
Take-out	Granite Hot Springs



Draining the south side of the Gros Ventre Wilderness, Granite Creek tumbles into a magical valley of class IV, before plunging over the namesake falls, and calming to fantastic class III.

Mountain Sentinels • Scott McCoy at the crux of Granite Creek

Gros Ventre

The big landslide that dropped thousands of boulders into the French named Gros Ventre (fat belly) river valley did wonders to what would normally be a meandering stream to the north of Jackson. Thanks to the 1925 event, which formed Lower Slide Lake, paddlers can now put-in at the natural outflow for a scenic stretch of class IV- boulder garden rapids. The flow that winds through the rock jumbles has a long season of runnability. Expect to find plenty of eddy hopping action for those wishing to hone their technical skills, and a safe main flow for the off-line paddler. Low water will mellow the run to class III and higher flows will eliminate almost all of the eddies in the steeper sections, creating a IV+ flurry of read-and-run waves and holes.

The action starts off quickly and remains constant for about five drops before slowly mellowing into the flats. Hundreds of small eddies offer a means to pick the rapids apart, but scouting and portaging will be very difficult. Miss a few ugly rocks and remain upright as much as possible to avoid taking hits. A strong roll is advisable since a swim at any level could be rather painful and rescues difficult due to the lack of large eddies. A flatwater paddle out and a great view of the Tetons reward a successful descent. Sunsets here can be especially magnificent.

Upper: Putting-in at Warden Bridge provides beginers with an 8-mile stretch of class III- whitewater above Lower Slide Lake. Take-out at the north shore of the lake. Gros Ventre River Rd provides and easy shuttle, and a few campgrounds can be used as alternate put-ins.

Directions: Drive north on Hwy 191/89, and turn right at the well-marked Gros Ventre Junction turnoff. From here drive 8.1 miles, passing through Kelly, and turn right on the Gros Ventre Road following the signs toward Atherton Creek Campground. The road immediately goes past Kelly Warm Springs. This is a popular spot so please drive slowly. The take-out is at the dirt parking lot on the Teton Park/Forest Service Boundary. There is a Bridger/Teton Forest sign immediately after. To reach the put-in continue 2.5 miles east on the road, and turn right onto Taylor Ranch Rd. This cruises through slide debris as it leads to a bridge crossing the river. Park unobtrusively to avoid landowner conflicts and add some spice to your run by launching off the bridge (not recommended at flows below 1 foot).

CFS	0.5'<min<2'<optimal 4'<high
Class	IV-<4'<IV
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	115 fpm action
Length	2.5 miles
Season	May to July (natural)
Gauge	Slide Lake Outlet visual
Put-in	Taylor Ranch Road
Take-out	Gros Ventre Rd

Crystal Creek

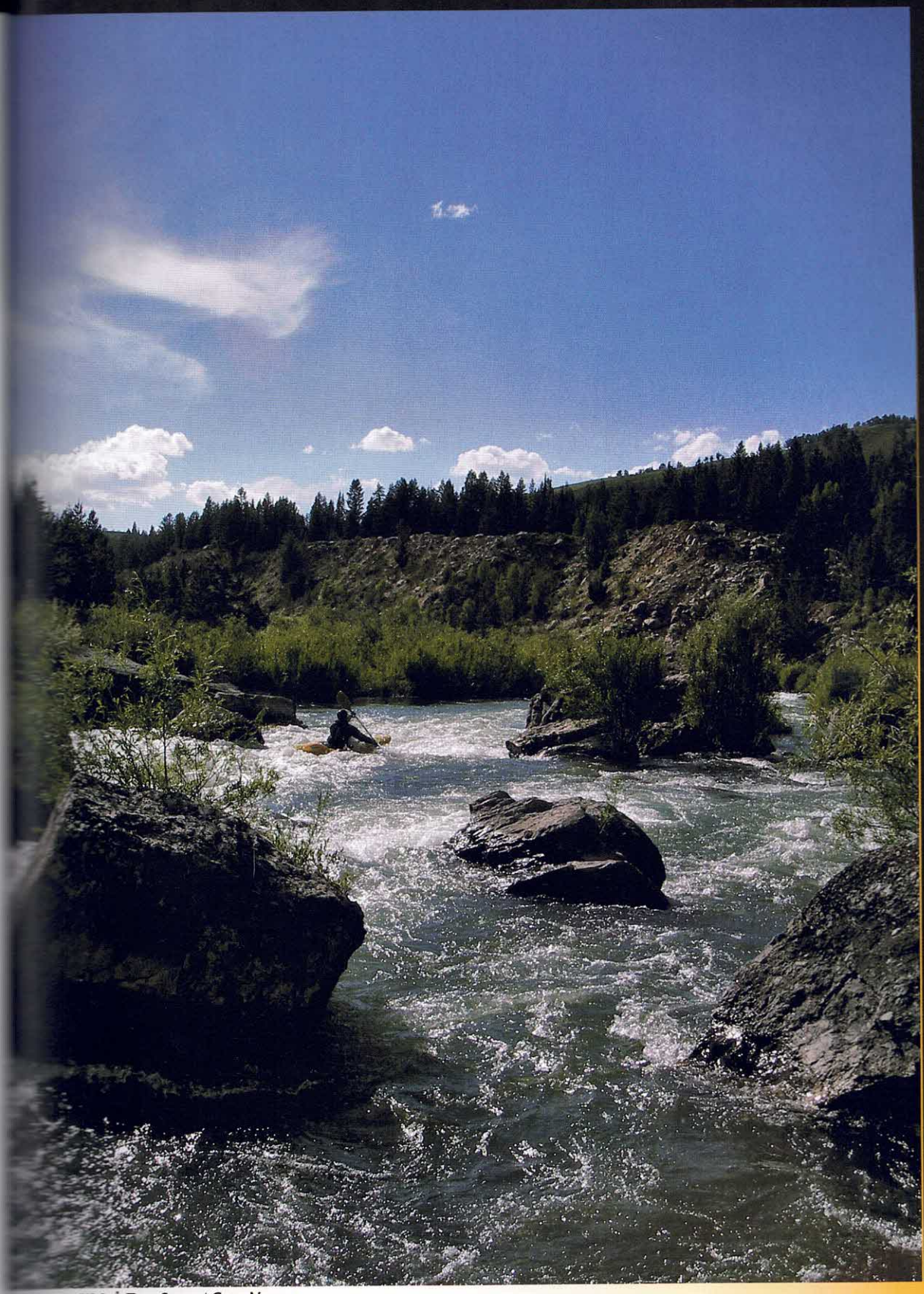
Crystal Creek would be a great quick run, if you didn't have to hike the shuttle. The reward gained in paddling this cool class IV+ mini canyon won't necessarily outweigh the effort to reach the meadow at the top of the run, unless you are used to shouldering your boat on less than ideal trails. The best scouting and (in my opinion) hiking trail is high above the canyon on river right, where the key is to find the correct starting point. Hiking up the river, and then up the sketchy scree field to the main trail is not recommended. Instead, drive to the end of the road, then go back 100 yards where there is a trail that leads directly away from the river, initially at a slight downstream angle. Use this for the most direct route to get above the canyon on river right, and to be able to hike and scout at the same time. Locals will tell you that the river left "maintained" trail is better, but after hiking both I disagree (especially since you can't scout from that side). The exception would be in early spring when snow melt or rain would make the narrow river right trail muddy, and a slip would send your boat to the bottom of the canyon in an instant. Hike included, the round-trip time on a solo mission of this run was 48 minutes, and that was eddy hopping at low flow. The take-out is a sweet campsite.

Directions: Take Gros Ventre Rd past Lower Slide Lake, and continue upstream until crossing over Crystal Creek. Go .4 mile past the bridge, and turn right at the sign for Red Rock Ranch. In a ½ mile veer left towards the Crystal Creek trailhead sign (high clearance is nice).

CFS	150<min<250<best
Class	IV
Quality	★★★
Gradient	150 fpm
Length	1 mile
Season	May to July
Gauge	visual
Put-in	meadow
Take-out	trailhead

Tina Swan ♦Crystal Creek put-in

The peacefulness of the Gros Ventre river valley will likely catch your attention, and the class IV whitewater will keep it. A pristine campsite awaits at the Crystal Creek take-out.



KM Tina Swan Gros Ventre

Blackrock Creek

If you're looking for steep creeking near Jackson, Black Rock Creek is one of your closest options. It is a low volume steep creek that flows west off of Togwotee Pass in the Wind River Mountains. In typical western creek fashion, it drops continuously and turgidly. Be prepared for non-stop action as there is constant rock dodging and tree ducking. Also, if you want to play it extra safe, throw in a bottle of bear spray—this is grizzly country.

The panoramic view of the Tetons and Winds disappear as you enter the densely pine-forested river corridor. Sharp conglomerate rock makes up most of the riparian geology and parts of the riverbed are crumbling on themselves and constantly changing. Don't be discouraged if you are continuously bouncing off rocks in the beginning as the river soon narrows and deepens. It may seem too bony in the first couple miles of constant Class IV, but you will likely appreciate the lower volume as things pick up.

The first major rapid can be identified by a massive castle-like rock on river left. After narrowing and steepening the river takes a sharp left hand bend. The rapid is about 100 yards long and should be scouted on river right. Following this rapid the Black Rock roars on in a similar fashion for about three miles. Always be on the lookout for trees in the river as these are definitely the biggest hazard of the run. Many eddy lines are not clean and portaging often requires frantic eddy turns and grabbing onto brush. Another rapid to note is at the end of this three-mile section. It has always had a diagonal log across the river immediately followed by another log. It is the longest and most difficult drop on this run and is easiest to scout on river right. Approximately one more mile of Class IV-V whitewater follows, before the river eases into meandering Class II-III for a couple miles to the take-out. It is hard to just drift this section due to trees across the river, but many can be paddled over or under.

Although Black Rock does not win any awards for aesthetic riverbeds it is certainly worth the journey. For those who enjoy Class V tree moves the Blackrock is for you. If you are hesitant to commit to this down and dirty creek, keep in mind that it is always fairly easy to hike out to the highway which parallels the run the entire way. Don't worry, your won't be the first.

CFS	300<optimal<600
Class	V
Quality	★★★
Gradient	185 fpm, 300 crux
Length	8 miles
Season	May to June
Gauge	Buffalo Fork nr Moran (barometer)
Put-in	blw Togwotee Lodge
Take-out	Blackrock Ranger Station

Gauge: Roughly 15-20% of the Buffalo Fork near Moran, WY.

Directions: From Moran Junction head east on Hwy 287/26 toward Dubois. The take-out is east of Moran, at the Black Rock District Ranger Station. Drive 7.4 miles east on Hwy 287/26, and turn right on a small dirt road veering off the highway. If you get to Togwotee Lodge, you have gone too far. Drive about .2 miles, park and walk down to the river.

-Dave Collins & Aaron Pruzan

South Fork Buffalo River

This run has a little something for everyone and since it happens later in the season it is a great way to spend a hot summer day when other runs may be finished. The hike is on a good trail and is mostly downhill. Shouldering your boat is the best option as trees make using a back yak difficult. There are three options for putting in as described below. This gives intermediate boaters an opportunity to get the feel for a wilderness run in a beautiful canyon.

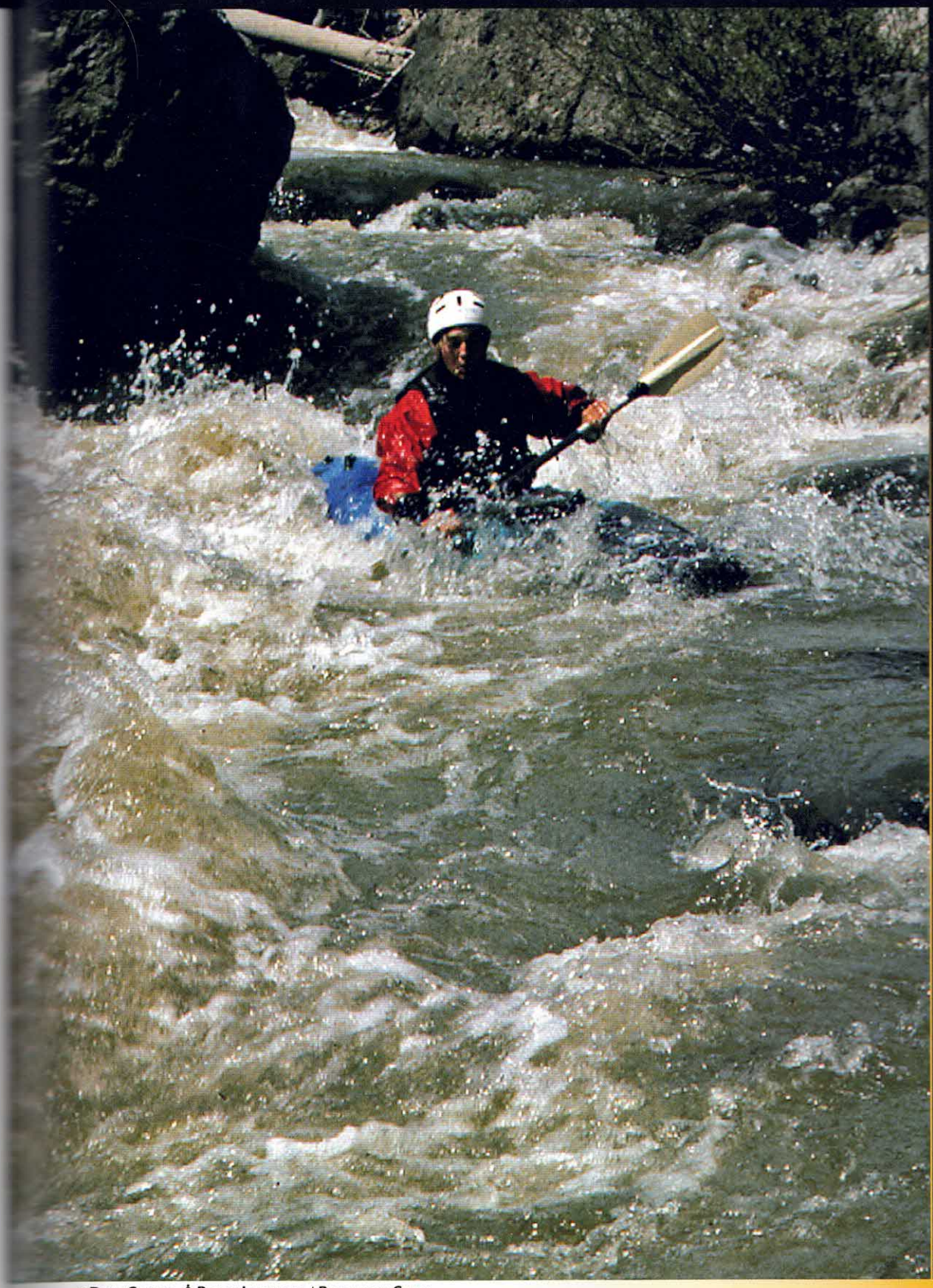
The upper gorge may not seem like much as you hike up the last mile to the top but the first ½ mile has vertical rock walls, is totally committing and has potential for wood problems. Scout and decide wisely before getting in as it is easy start where you crossed the river below if you don't like what you see or the water is too high. The rapids in the UG are of the bedrock gorge type with ledges and rock problems. Most everyone agrees that the upper gorge is worth the hike.

If you have a group of varying abilities you will soon be reunited and get to enjoy the ledge drops in the Class III/IV- limestone canyon below.

Upper CFS	300<optimal<600
Lower CFS	600<best
Class	V upper III (IV-) lower
Quality	★★★
Gradient	70 fpm (360 upper)
Length	1 mile upper 8 miles lower
Season	June to August
Gauge	50% of Buffalo Fork nr Moran
Put-in	Togwotee Mtn. Lodge or trail
Take-out	Turpin Meadow bridge

Dave Collins Aaron Pruzan Blackrock Creek

If you're looking for steep creeking then check out Blackrock Creek and the SF Buffalo, both of which flow off the Togwotee Pass of the Wind River Mountains.

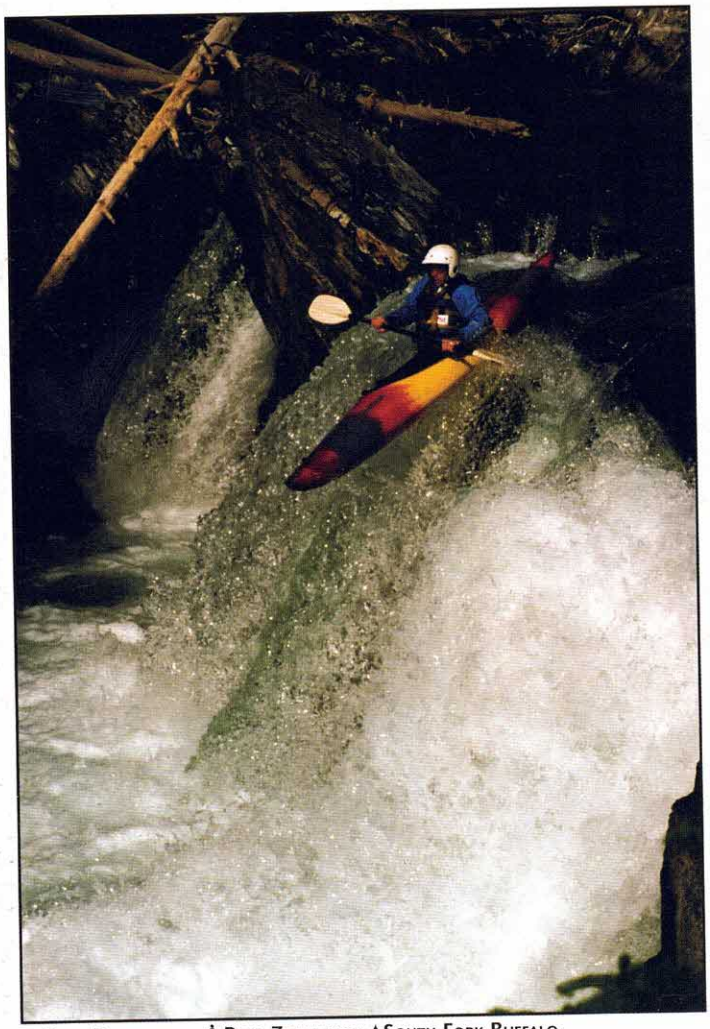


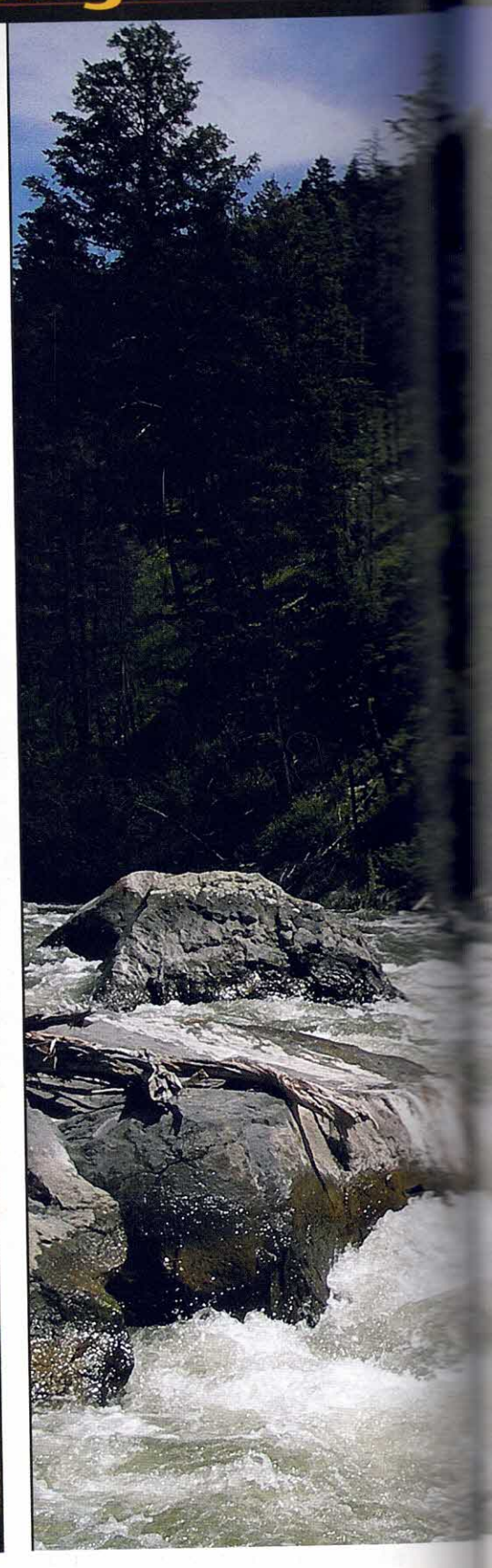
Dave Collins Brady Johnston Blackrock Creek

After a couple miles the river opens into a meadow where it flows under a pack bridge. This is where the trail from Togwotee reaches the river and is another put-in option. From here the river soon enters another canyon which is a fun Class II-III float that has great fishing.

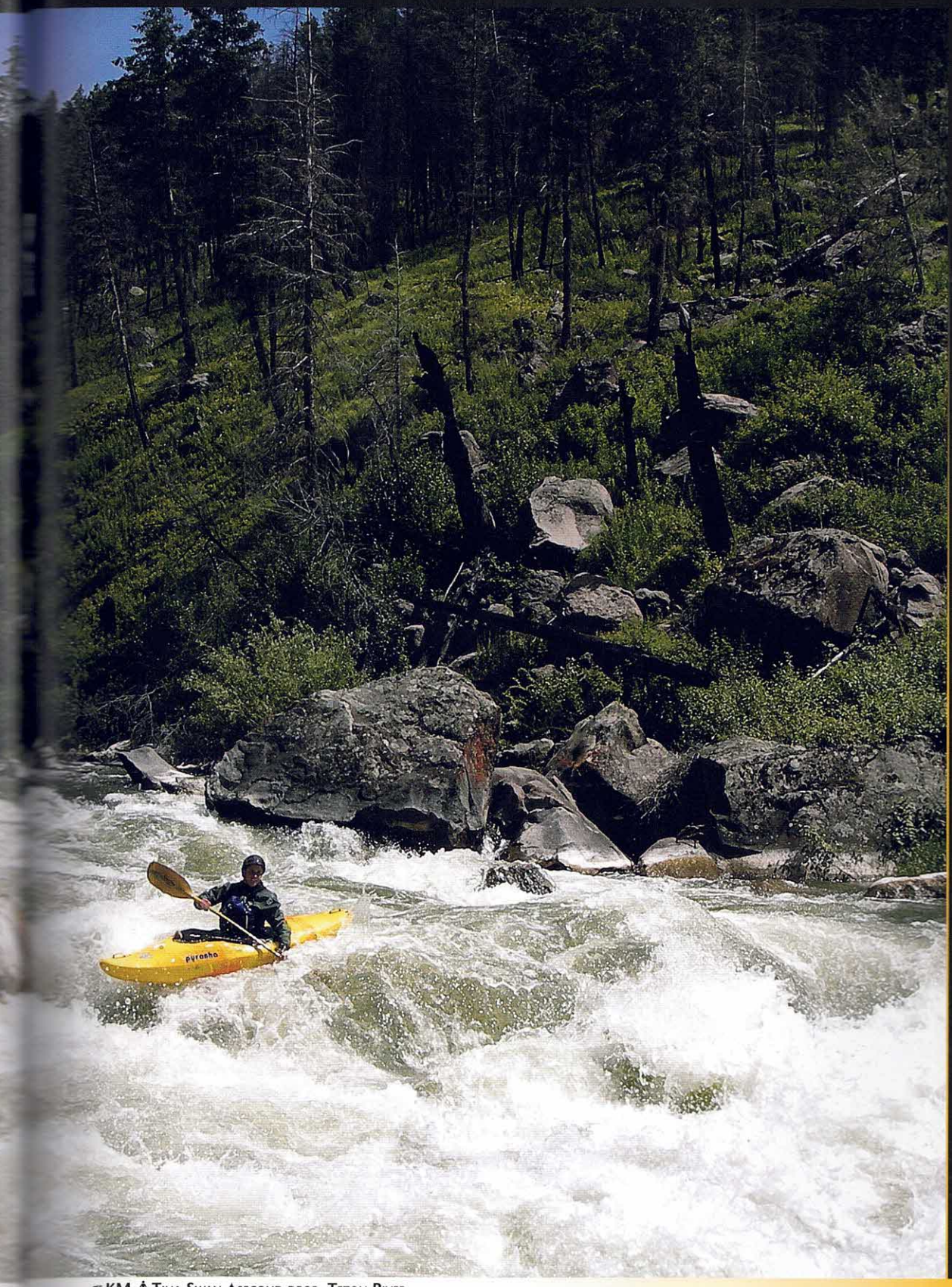
Directions: To reach the put-in drive 21 miles east of Moran Junction on Highway 287/26 towards Togwotee Pass and Dubois and turn left at Togwotee Mtn. Lodge. A short service road between the lodge and the gas station leads to the trailhead. The trail goes to the north and switchbacks down through the trees. In about 2 miles the trail opens into a meadow and there is a spur that branches off upstream and to the right (east). To reach the Class II-III section, do not turn right and continue another ½ mile to the river. If you are headed upstream the trail goes uphill for roughly another mile and then descends steeply to the river. This is the put-in for the Class III+/IV- limestone canyon. For Class V gnarl, cross the river and continue up about a mile to the upper gorge. To reach the take-out return to highway 287/26 and head back down the pass toward Moran approximately 3 miles to Turpin Meadows Road. Turn right (north) and drive down 5 miles of improved dirt road until the road reaches the take-out bridge.

-Aaron Pruzan & Dave Pennington





Dave Pennington Paul Zirkelbach South Fork Buffalo



KM Tina Swan ♦second drop, Teton River

Teton River

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	300	650	1200	2800
Character	defined drops	padded paddling	gets big	wow
Class	IV (V- x3)	IV+ (V- x 3)	V- (V x4)	V (V+ x4)
Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	100 fpm action, 160 fpm crux			
Remoteness	remote, but not trapped			
Hitchability	poor			
Length	6.5 miles to Felt Power Plant, 13 miles to France Boat Ramp			
Season	April to October			
Gauge	Teton River near Driggs			
Put-in	Hwy 33 bridge			
Take-out	1000 North Road (Power Plant Rd)			

Located on the Idaho side of the Teton Range, the Teton River's close proximity to Jackson and long season make it one of the better advanced-paddling runs of the area. Boaters that make the northwest journey will be greeted by dirt roads coursing over hills that are landscaped with potato fields, an impressive site in itself for those that have rarely traveled through Idaho. Nestled between the farm fields the Teton River weaves through a mini canyon of intense beauty and flows over a handful of boulder garden rapids.

Putting-in at Hwy 33 will start the trip off with about three miles of moving flatwater before the action really gets going. (It is possible to put-in below the flatwater but permission from the land owner must be obtained and this is difficult) Class IV- read-and-run whitewater is the norm, interspersed by four distinct rapids, the first of which has an easily recognizable horizon line. Although it's possible to boat scout the sneak line on river right, paddlers should take a look at the 4' river left boof for maximum enjoyment.

The next drop of consequence almost always has logs pinned in it and they form the main hazard as the river twists from left to right and back again. Scout or portage on river right. The third drop (Mad Dog's) is named after Billy Danford, a Jackson Hole & Teton Valley skiing legend who pinned in the deadly sieve on river left at the bottom of the drop. This rapid has a shallow entry and numerous boulders which turn into holes at high flows. Scout or portage on river right.

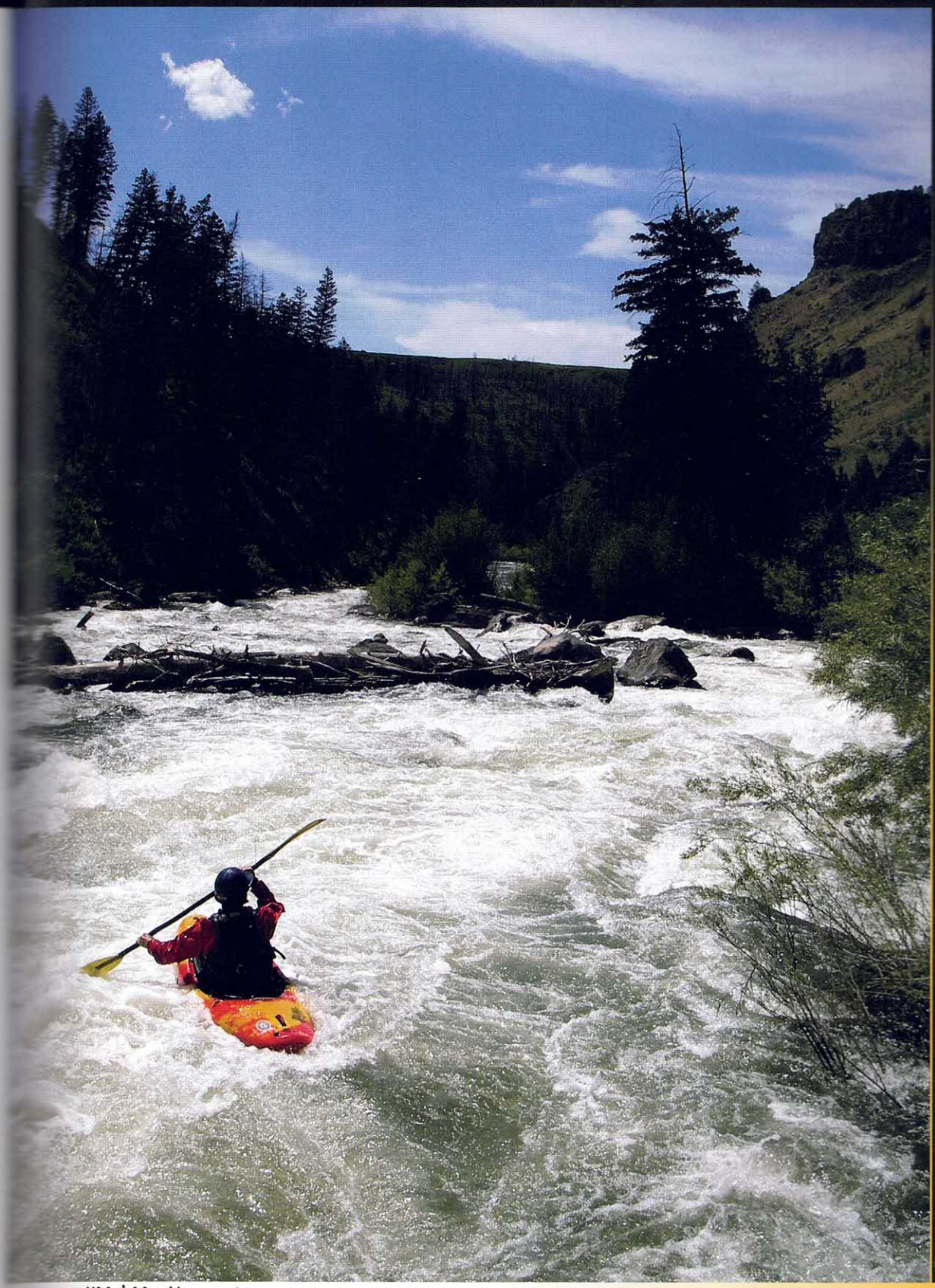
A manmade jumble of rocks creates a diversion dam and forms what is generally the most difficult drop of the run. There is a large pool and on old pump intake above the lip. Scout from the left where both the clean line and portage route exist. At medium to high levels a left, left run flows nicely. At lower water more rock dodging toward the center and a well timed boof are required to avoid a dented kayak.

From there down it is read-and-run, with one sizeable wave-hole as the canyon opens—easily avoidable with a right line. Shortly below the whitewater abruptly ends in the pool created by the Felt Power Plant. The dam at the Power Plant intake is runnable at the right levels. Scout on river left and be sure to make your boof. Otherwise take out just upstream of the dam on river right where you may have to throw your boat over a fence if the gate is locked. Hike the road to the canyon rim, veering right onto a trail half way up. If you're still hungry for action, pick your way down the drops below the dam (Class V+/VI) and then hike out on the improved road below the power plant. For a longer run continue downstream and enjoy the two Class IV rapids before the Bitch Creek confluence and paddle out on the Teton to France Boat Ramp. See the description for Bitch Creek for more info on this section.

Directions

To get to the take-out, drive north on Highway 33 from Driggs, ID. 1.6 miles northwest of Tetonia turn right onto Hwy 32. In about three miles you will pass Badger Creek, and will want to take the first left onto 1000 N Rd (also known as Power Plant Road, but not labeled). Continue on this road, headed west, then north and west again, until it dead-ends at the Felt Power Plant. Kayaker and farmer relations have been strained in this area, partially due to speeding and other inappropriate acts. Make a conscious effort to improve the public image that kayakers currently have in this area. To reach the put-in return to Hwy 33 and turn right, which delivers you to a bridge in 2.5 miles. For a longer run, take out at France Boat Ramp (see the description for Bitch Creek).

Hidden among potato fields in the western shadows of Grand Teton, the Teton River boasts very high quality paddling inbetween the rolling hills north of Driggs, Idaho.



KM Mike Varilone run-out of the second drop

Bitch Creek & Falls River

Bitch Creek

Bitch Creek flows through a beautiful basalt canyon which, like the Teton, cuts through rolling potato fields. The canyon is narrower and even more scenic than the Teton and has no intrusions from irrigation projects. Recently a house was built on the canyon rim and others may follow, but it is still a beautiful wilderness run and getting out of the canyon in most places is an ordeal.

At medium flows Bitch Creek offers Class III/IV boulder dodging with blind corners and the constant danger of log jams. There is one Class V rapid, Driscoll's Drop, which is a little over a mile into the run and marked by a cliff wall on river right—scout or portage right. There is a stretch of continuous Class III below Driscoll's combined with a sharp riverbed make it a bad place to swim. The pace slacks off a bit for a few miles and when it picks up again there is a creek wide ledge which can have a sticky hole. Below this is Roscoe's Rock. Although the rock was knocked over by recent high water you still want to scout or portage on river left. The last few miles above the confluence of the Teton offer non-stop Class III/IV whitewater with plenty of rocks and logs.

Below the confluence the canyon opens up and there are five rapids created following the Teton Dam disaster by the slumping of the canyon walls. These drops are big fun at high flows, but in between the water is very flat. The take-out is on river right after the second set of power lines cross the river. Bitch Creek is not recommended at low water. If it is bony at the put-in, it will be bony throughout the run. At high water things get fairly continuous and it is a stomping good time.

Directions: To reach the put-in drive north from Driggs, ID on Hwy 33. Follow the hwy through Tetonia and turn north on Hwy 32 toward Ashton. Drive approximately 8 miles until the road heads down a hill towards a bridge. Park on the left side of the highway before crossing the creek and follow the old road to the water. Please be considerate as this is private land. (There is no sign for Bitch Creek but there is a Fremont County sign at the bridge.) To reach the take-out continue across the creek and drive north on Hwy 32 approximately 7.4 miles. Shortly after passing a big Pillsbury grain silo the road begins to curve right and go up a hill. Turn left on Hog Hollow Road. Drive west until the road forks. Stay left and on the improved gravel road. Follow this down into the canyon and over the crumbling boat ramp that serviced the old reservoir. Continue down the double track a short way to the river. This last part can be tricky and high clearance or 4WD is needed. It is only a short walk down to the river and driving this stretch is not required.

CFS	200<min<1000<best
Class	III<600<IV (V)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	52 fpm, 120 fpm crux
Length	13 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	Teton Riv nr St. Anthony (roughly 25%)
Put-in	Hwy 32 bridge
Take-out	Old France Boat Ramp

Falls River

This section of the Falls River is a fun intermediate run and has quality downriver play with eddy access to a couple of waves and holes. Like the Teton and Bitch Creek, the Falls River runs through a basalt canyon that is surrounded by large farms. While not as deep a canyon as its neighbors to the south, it still fells wild and remote. After a mile of flatwater small rapids begin to build and the third mile is fairly continuous. About five miles into the run is a sizeable diversion dam which creates a backwater. While the dam may be runnable, there is an easy portage on river left. The section below the dam has the best rapid of the run. The river turns right, then left where there is a large mid-stream boulder and, at higher flows, a big hole that can provide some huge air. Look out for wood and scout river right if necessary. From there it is a short paddle to the take-out on river left.

Directions: To reach the take-out, go south from Ashton, ID 2 miles on Hwy 32 and turn left onto East 1200 North (also called Ashton-Flagg Ranch Road or Reclamation Road) and continue east for approximately 3.7 miles to the bridge. To reach the put-in continue 5.3 miles east on 1200 and turn left. Drive north .7 miles to the put-in.

-Aaron Pruzan & Dave Pennington (both)

CFS	400<min<1500<best
Class	III<1500<III+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	42 fpm
Length	6 miles
Season	April to July
Gauge	Falls Riv nr Squirrel
Put-in	CCC Bridge
Take-out	Reclamation Rd bridge

Dave Pennington ⅄ Marc Soderquist ♦classic endo, Falls River

Smiles Everywhere * Making
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Henrys Fork & Mesa Falls

Henrys Fork

North of Driggs, ID, near the southwestern border of Yellowstone there is some beautiful country. A couple of very scenic waterfalls exist in the region, the best of which are found on the Henrys Fork. With consistent, nearly year round flows and a variety of boatable stretches, the Henrys Fork should be thought of though as not only a park-and-huck special, but also as a great place for Montuckians of all skill levels to get their off season fix.

There are two series of falls on the Henrys, Upper and Lower Mesa Falls. Above the upper falls there is a wondrously scenic eleven mile stretch with three good class V rapids and a lot of class flat, with an occasional III. This run begins at Hatchery Ford with a sign warning of the large falls downstream. All of the big drops have very distinct horizon lines and should be easily recognizable. The first two rapids come around mile-two, the third appears around mile-five and there is also one class IV ledge around mile seven. Make sure to scout the take-out directly above Upper Mesa Falls, as it would be an uncomfortable one to miss. The main falls of the upper has a very shallow LZ and is generally unrunnable, but there is a smaller falls with a nice shelf for boofing below.

CFS	1k<optimal<3k
Class	II (V x3, IV)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	10 fpm (+4 big drops)
Length	14.3 miles
Season	year round
Gauge	Henrys Frk nr Ashton
Put-in	Hatchery Ford
Take-out	Lower Mesa Falls

Directions: The take-out for the Hatchery Ford run is found at the Upper Mesa parking area on the Mesa Falls Scenic Byway, north of Ashton, ID. This is a pay area and also the put-in for the Lower Mesa park-and-huck, so run both to get the most huck for your buck. The put-in is found by continuing on towards Island Park and by looking for a sign to Hatchery Ford on the left. Follow this dirt road to the river.

Lower Mesa Falls

Around a mile or so downstream is Lower Mesa Falls, a sight to behold, with two tiers of thundering whitewater spread out over a double drop on the left and a single shot with a bounce on the right. The heavy spray creates rainbows and covers the walls of this igneous canyon with what appears to be tropical ferns and rainforest vegetation. The lush flora clings to the canyon rim and rock towers surrounding the waterfall, creating an image that could easily be mistaken as a view down a Hawaiian coastline. The sign at the falls says 65 ft. but a small tier above the double drop is rarely run so the total vertical on the left is probably closer to 50' (15' on one to 35' on two). The right probably does drop around 60-65' with a shelf halfway down where most people bounce and then fall into a deep seam between the two colliding sides of the falls. Swim away from the caves if necessary. Below Lower Mesa there is a mellow but still very scenic stretch down to the bridge at US 191/20 north of Ashton.

CFS	1k<min<1.5k<best
Class	V (right line NR)
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	50 feet in two drops
Length	park-and-huck
Season	year round
Gauge	Henrys Frk nr Ashton
Riv Access	upper Mesa parking

Directions: Take the Mesa Falls Scenic Byway north from Ashton to the Lower Mesa Overlook – this a cool view of the park-and-huck. Follow the old road out of the Upper Mesa parking down to the canyon rim. Some creative boat passing is required to get to the put-in which is basically a seal slide onto the shelf creating the first drop. Ferry over to the right if that's what you came for. Carry up the steep scree slope below the falls or continue down for a scenic float to Ashton.

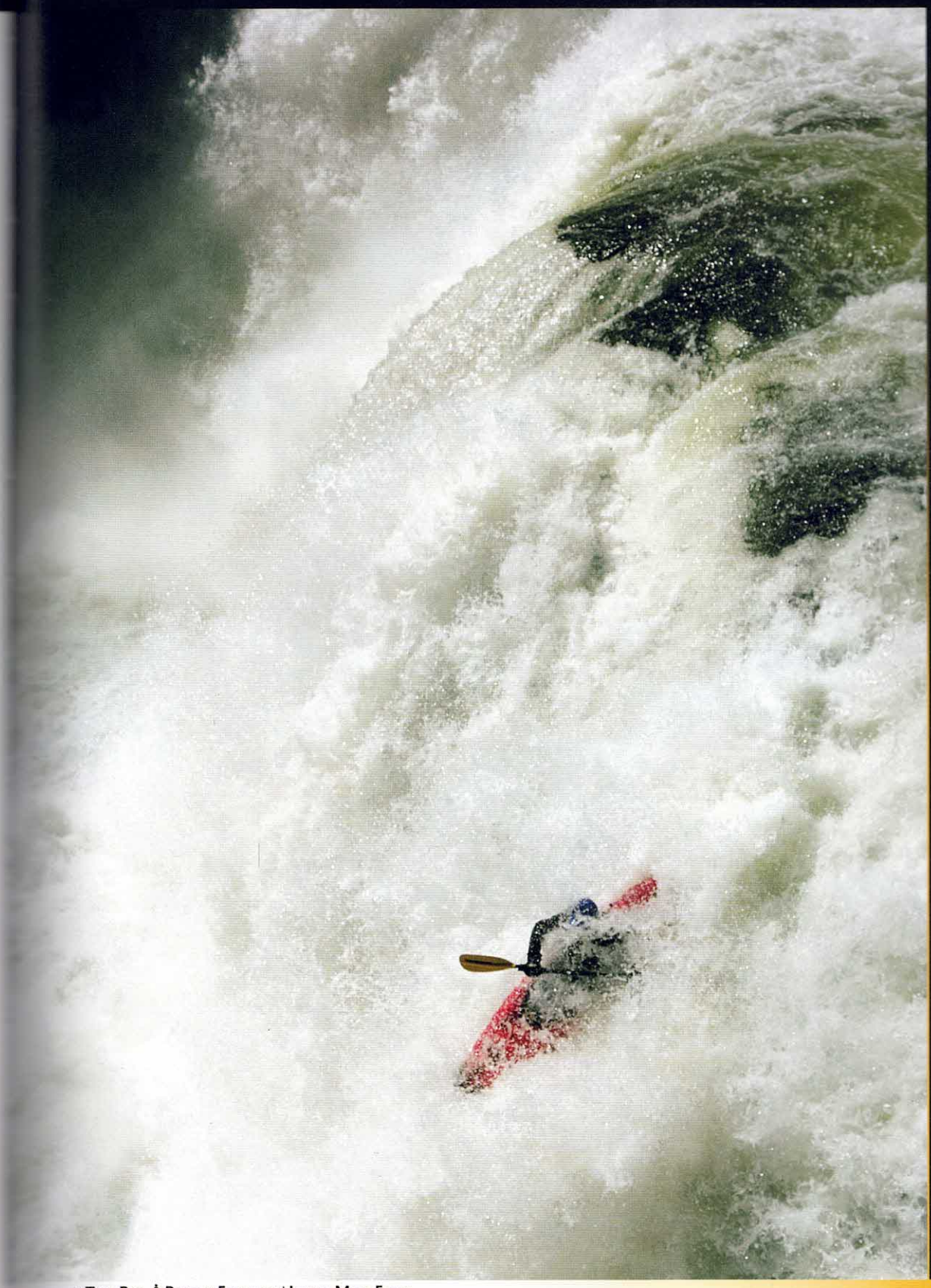
Teton Creek

Hike-to paddling in the actual Teton Mountains, instead of in the broad valleys below them. Unfortunately, the creek features numerous wood strainers and unrunnable rock jumbles. From the willow flats that are obvious from the trail, to the trailhead is class IV or less creeking in a beautiful and secluded creek-bed. Alaska Basin down to the willow flats was explored by young rippers Brady, Austin and Conner. Even they couldn't save this upper section from being a portage-fest fist fight.

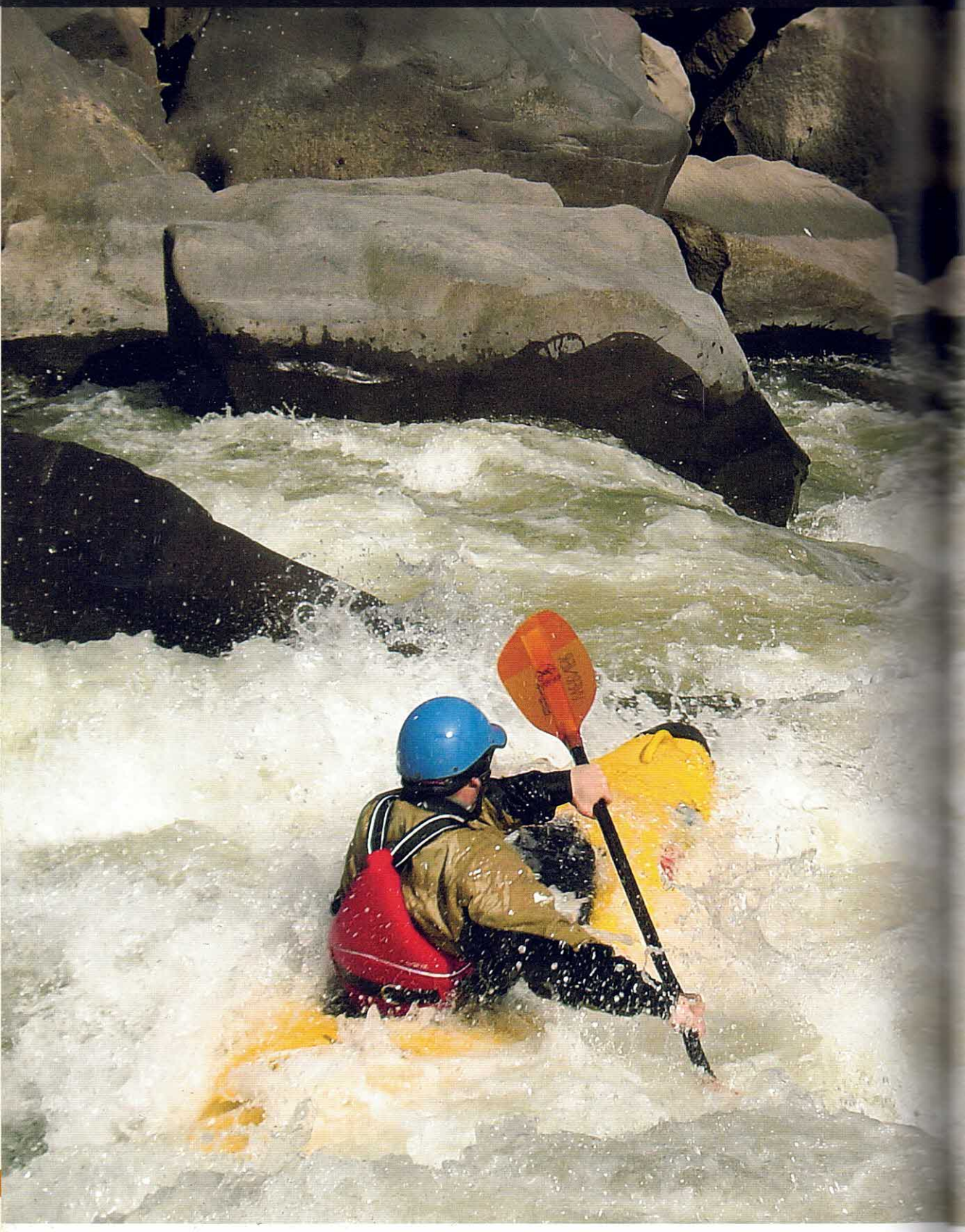
Directions: From Alta on the ID/WY state line drive east on 15 Rd and stay right (FR 009) until you reach the Teton Canyon Trailhead.

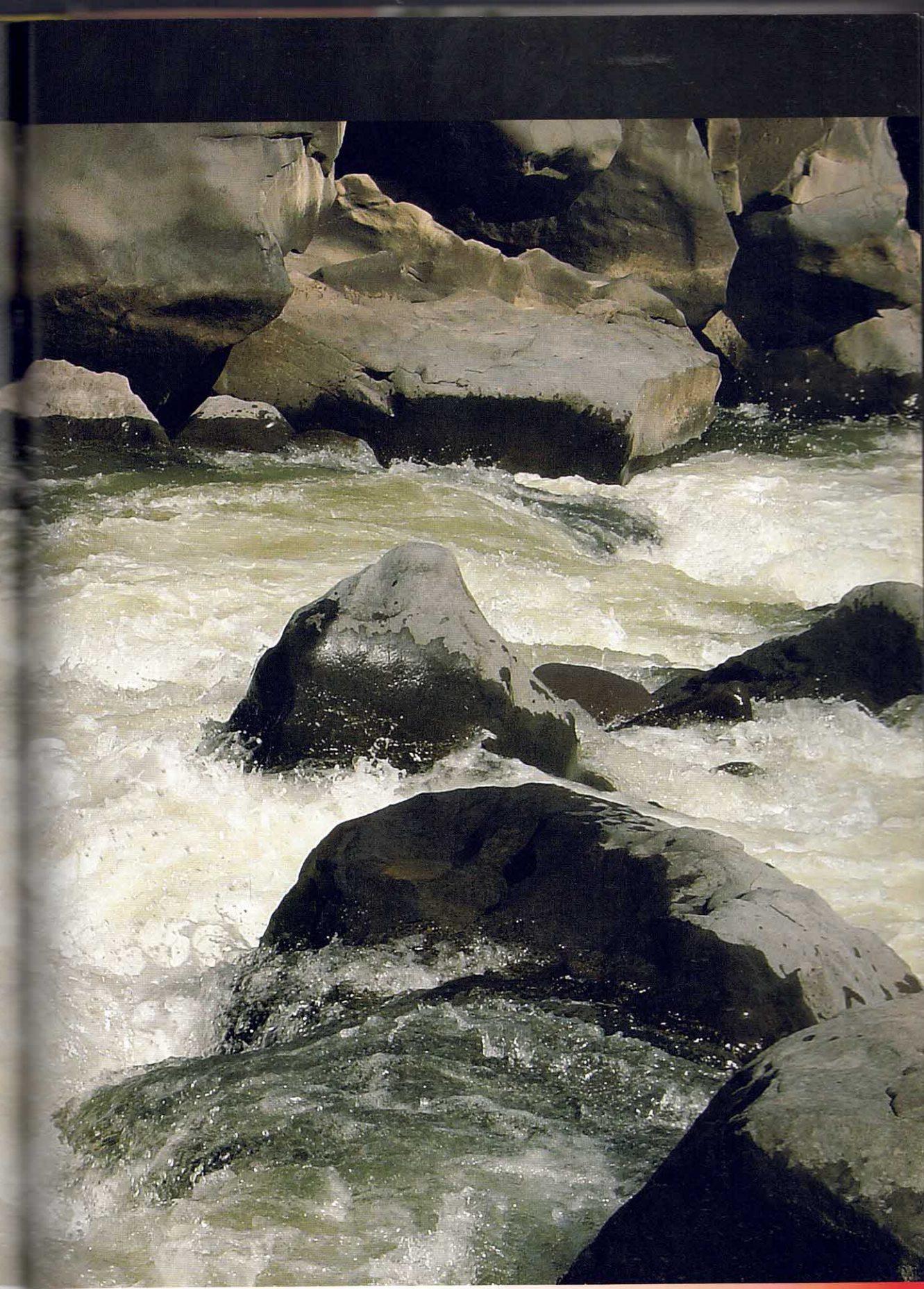
SARAH KEMPER AUSTIN RATHMAN ONE OF THE MORE QUALITY DROPS

The sign at the falls says 65′ but a small tier is rarely run, so the total vertical on the left is probably closer to 50′. The right probably does drop 65′, and goes with a big hit.



Tom Bol 🚶 Patrick Forester 💧Lower Mesa Falls





KM Dave Bumgarner Big Arsenic, Upper Taos Box

Rio Chama

Upper Chama

High in the Rio Chama drainage, above the town that bears the rivers name, there exists a short blast of conglomerate boulder garden creeking. The put-in is at the Archuleta Creek Campground on the Lobo Ranch public easement, but once you descend downstream you quickly leave the easement and must make a stealthy portage of the Lobo Ranch boundary fence. Though confrontations have been few, these ranchers can get aggressive about keeping their land private. If the first few miles of the run are not fast or feel shallow you may have put-on at too low of a flow. At least a solid medium flow is recommended for this stretch due to the sieved out nature of the Fat Rapids.

The Fat Rapids build in intensity as the canyon walls close-in. Scouting and portaging is possible throughout the canyon and many of the rapids have significant horizon lines that require a look. Near the end of the steep stuff is the crux Terminator Hole. The Terminator Hole is ominous. The rapid is marked by an eroding, red canyon wall on river right, and is a mandatory scout. As of 2006 this drop has been clogged with wood, so you won't have to make up an excuse to portage. The rapids begin to ease and eventually peter out to class II/III before the take-out bridge.

CFS	400<min
Class	IV<750<V
Quality	★★
Gradient	80 fpm avg
Length	7.5 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Archuleta Creek
Take-out	Hwy 17 bridge

Directions: From Chama drive north on Hwy 17 to the take-out bridge.To reach the put-in continue north up Hwy 17 four miles to FR 121 and the Lobo Ranch public easement. Turn left (west) on FR 121 and continue to the first campground/corral which is the Archuleta Creek put-in.

Wilderness Section

Designated as Wild and Scenic, the Rio Chama flows through a healthy swath of Forest Service Wilderness and BLM wilderness study areas. This 1500 foot deep sandstone canyon has a distinct northern New Mexican flavor. This is a beautiful overnight float trip for the lover of desert canyons or the avid fisherman. Historic sites and worthy side canyon hikes are interspersed throughout the canyon. Clear water released below the reservoir offers excellent translucent fishing, unique to New Mexico. The good fishing usually only lasts for the first mile or two though before the churning class II whitewater mixes up enough sand to turn the water back to its natural mud filled concoction. The season is highly variable, but prime flows generally occur during the normal New Mexico run-off period in early spring. There is also a good chance for recreational flows to be provided on weekends, some years all the way into September.

Permit: Boaters wishing to float this stretch between May 1st and Labor Day will need to procure a permit through a BLM lottery. During the rest of the year a self serve permit is available at the put-in. Information about the permit lottery can be obtained from www.nm.blm.gov/recreation/taos/rio_chama_wild_scenic_river.html.

Directions: The put-in is at the El Vado Ranch west of Tierra Amarillo on Hwy 112. The take-out is found by heading back to Tierra Amarillo and by going south on Hwy 84 then west on FR 151, found a 1/2 mile north of Abique Lake. FR 151 parallels the river after three or four miles, from Abiquiu Reservoir all the way up to the take-out at Chavez Canyon. A five dollar fee per person is required at the launch site.

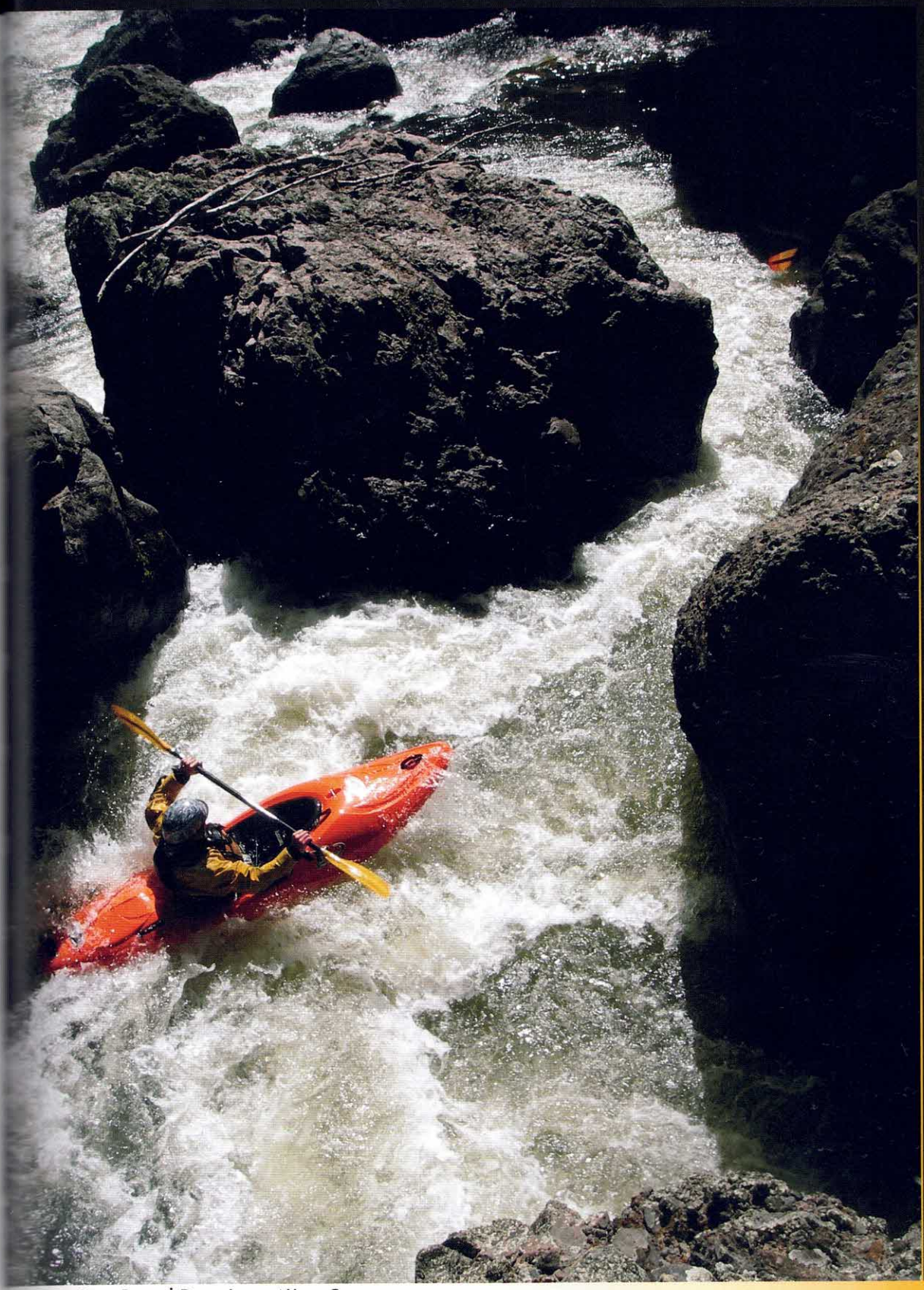
CFS	400<min<1200<high
Class	II+ (III)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	15 fpm
Length	9 miles day 31 miles all
Season	April to August
Gauge	Chama abv Abiquiu
Put-in	El Vado Ranch or Chavez Canyon
Take-out	Big Eddy Access

Day Stretch (use Wilderness Section beta box)

The Day Stretch begins below Chavez Canyon and though roadside is very scenic. Man made intrusions are limited along the shoreline, and are of interest to the visiting paddler. We don't see much real adobe north of Pueblo. Many people continue on through the day stretch to increase the length of the Wilderness run, but the section can easily stand on its own. The nine miles of great beginner class II/III run most of the spring and summer in a good year, with releases from the reservoir often keeping the flow above 250 cfs. Some play opens up at higher flows and three or four distinguished rapids may trip up the non-aggresive paddler.

Directions: The Chavez Canyon put-in is off FR 151 (see above), before the road ends at the Christ of the Desert Monastery. The take-out is at the Big Eddy access, nine miles south on FR 151, just upstream of some cool Adobe ruins.

High in the Rio Chama drainage, above the town that bears the rivers name, there exists a short blast of conglomerate boulder garden creeking.



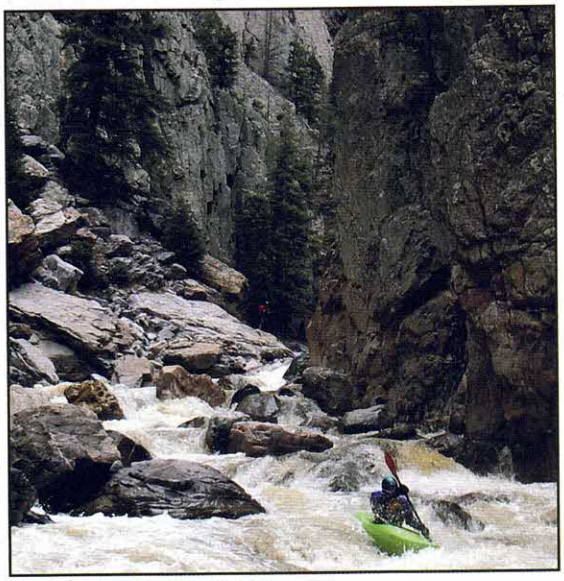
Scott Baker Daniel Lowry Upper Chama

Rio Brazos

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Actual CFS	150	200	300	450
Character	really bony spots	great	even better	juicy with walls
Class	V+ (NRs, Ps)	V+ (NRs, Ps)	V+ (NRs, Ps)	V+ (NRs, Ps)
Quality	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	280 fpm max, 200 fpm avg action			
Remoteness	very high			
Hitchability	Shuttle Bunny nearly mandatory			
Length	14.5 miles			
Season	May, June (side of peak)			
Gauge	1/2 of Rio Chama near La Puente, NM (barometer)			
Put-in	6 miles past Yonderosa Gate (private)			
Take-out	public access point off of Rd 512			

This run should be high on the expert paddlers list for the sheer adventure created through the formidable combination of finding cooperative water levels, dealing with an epic shuttle setup, and lastly, the V+ whitewater. Only a handful of groups have completed the run, and a 'go for it' attitude will be a necessity for any successful trip. Paddlers who have experienced the Rio Brazos first hand agree that it truly is the "Shangri La" of the Southern Rockies. With 1800' vertical walls, challenging whitewater, and nearly unparalleled remoteness, those that make the trip in the future will surely agree.

The fact that this description is shorter than the Brazos directions should tip you off to the fact that this is not an easy shuttle. The key issues of the shuttle that could prematurely end your trip (or at least delay the schedule) are most commonly—closed gates on the six miles of private land at the end of the put-in road, lack of a shuttle driver, snow drifts, downed trees and mud slides blocking the road, rain, irritable landowners (about ½ and ½), and/or the three hours minimum it will likely take to drive from take-out to put-in. Plus, every gas station along Highway 64 at the take-out turns the pumps off around 10 pm. A shuttle driver is highly recommended. Be willing to hike to the river from the Yonderosa gate if vehicle access is denied (although long, the hike is mostly downhill).



ES Chris Morrison Lower Unnamed Gnar

The celebration of making it to the whitewater part of the run comes shortly after the put-in, at the class V Warm-Up Gorge. If major problems occur here, and the shuttle hasn't already left, bail at the bottom. A scenic class III float quickly turns into a likely, but not mandatory portage. Scramble around the river left side of the rapid and put in where comfortable.

The Brazos shows its true V+ character from here to the take-out, and the mere 14.5 miles of river are usually completed in two days. The whitewater is slightly manky and enjoyably steep, with three likely portages. The last two should come on the second day. The second portage is best executed with a river right-to-left ferry mid-way through. The third is a 30'+ falls that lands on rock, and it should be noted that this is the only drop that hasn't been attempted—the others have ended with varying results.

The entire run can be completed in one day, with a probable time of 11 hours for a strong group (not including any of the shuttle). Thus, it's recommended to bring the overnight gear to further enjoy the canyon and further suffer the portages. Look for a good campsite in the mile below the Bird's Nest.

There are many obstacles to overcome in order to complete the Rio Brazos. Those that overcome the obstacles will be rewarded with an unforgettable adventure through a pristine and highly remote wilderness—a boater's Shangri La.

THE SHANGRI LA OF ADVENTURE PADDLING. TWO DAYS OF V+ WHITEWATER WITH MINIMAL PORTAGING THROUGH AN 1800′ DEEP GORGE ARE YOURS—IF YOU SURVIVE THE MOST DIFFICULT SHUTTLE IN THIS BOOK.

CHRIS MORRISON ES BIRDS NEST

Rio Brazos

Directions

Use the shuttle map well on this one, and be prepared to be in the middle of nowhere on a brutally long and jarring 4WD road. Our best time was three hours from take-out to put-in one way. Find Tierra Amarillo, NM on the map, and drive there. A good meeting place at night is just north of town where Hwy 84 crosses the Rio Brazos, although sans camping. Start at this bridge.

To get to the take-out: Drive 0.9 miles and turn right onto Hwy 512 towards the town of Rio Brazos. Continue 6.7 miles and turn right into a driveway/public access, thanks to the Brazos Rim Landowners and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Camping isn't allowed, but we had no problems leaving a vehicle overnight. If it appears you are going to have trouble taking out here, then there is an alternative take-out found by driving approximately 4 miles up Hwy 512, and then turning right onto Fishtail Rd, which has a bridge over the Brazos. This option will add an extra 3 miles of class III paddling to the end of a long trip, and camping is still not allowed.

To reach the put-in: Drive south on Hwy 84 for 4.3 miles, and then turn left onto Hwy 64. Continue for 34 miles of intense elk dodging (past the signs for Hopewell Lake) and turn left on FR 133. Reach the intersection of FR 133 and FR 421 (FR 87 in gazetteer) in 3.9 miles, and turn left. We found camping in this area. Continue north on FR 133 (FR 87) for 8.2 miles until you reach a three-way intersection with a cattle fencing/staging area on the left. This is FR 87A. Turning right will lead to Hwy 285 in 10 miles. Turning left on FR 87 will keep you on track to the put-in. Veer left on FR 93 (crossing a cattle guard) at 3.7 miles. In 6.2 miles turn left and cross a small stream. From here it's a mere 3.5 miles more to the Yonderosa Gate.

What to do at the gate: I don't have a good answer as to what to do here. This is the start of the 6 miles of private land, and the worst part of the 4WD road, that leads to the put-in. If you are without a shuttle consider hiking in. If you have a shuttle driver, and the gate is unlocked, then you will probably want to go for it, and be on your best behavior for the ranchers. Go right at the first fork. We went right at the second fork as well, but it may have been better to go left. Either route will get you above the Warm-up Canyon. Fortunately, there aren't any year-round residences on this land. That being said, it's still probably not a good idea to leave a vehicle here (although we did, with a kind note, and $40 cash under the windshield wiper).

ES Chris Morrison Brazos Cliffs

SUBTERRANEAN SWIMMING

EXPERIENCING THE HUMAN ROTO-ROOTER ON THE UPPER TAOS BOX

-Jed Selby

On a relatively cold and cloudy day in March of 1999, a group of us from Durango and Taos headed down to the Rio Grande for a low water run of the Upper Taos Box. I think the flow was around 300 to 400 cfs. Either way it was low water on a fairly straight forward class V run according to the guide book. We geared up, walked down the trail and put on.

I was with my girlfriend at the time, Rebecca, who was a solid class IV and a timid class V boater. I assured her that the low water and the low gradient would provide us with plenty of eddies to break it up and make our way down. We paddled through a couple small rapids and got to an eddy at the top of NCO falls. Rebecca, Lillian, and I had pulled ahead of the group a bit, but we figured we would keep going.

The lead-in looked pretty mellow with a small horizon line just below. I paddled down to a lower eddy and looked over my shoulder, seeing that the main outflow was on river right with an eddy just after the base of the drop. I signaled the line to Rebecca and peeled out. The lead-in was a little bonier than I had expected, and it was hard to see all the rocks through the brown water. I caught the eddy just below the drop on river-right and waited.

As I watched Rebecca get near the lip of the drop her bow hit a rock and she went over the drop backwards, flipping at the base. She attempted a few rolls but she was getting dragged over shallow rocks on river-left, at one point hitting a rock so hard her boat lifted out of the water. Shortly thereafter she was out of her boat. Without thinking I peeled out and sprinted down to her. At that very moment I looked downstream and saw that about half of the river and Rebecca were heading straight towards a sieve.

At this point my normal way of being in this world subsided as my instinctive self arose—it is a state of being that I rarely experience and do not really understand. I paddled past her straight towards the sieve in an attempt to intervene. The main rock that the water was funneling underneath had a prominent feature that I was able to grab and get ready for her arrival. The water was getting sucked underneath my boat but was not powerful enough to pull me down in this position.

I was holding on with my left arm waiting to grab her with my right. Fifteen feet remained between us, and she was heading for me quickly. She swam over a rock and hit a small eddy temporarily slowing her down while her boat, full of water, passed her. Her boat got to me first and hit mine with tremendous velocity. I held on to the rock as long as I could, but my shoulder dislocated and I was sucked down, under the rock, in my boat. My eyes remained open, and the whole world slowed to a stand still. My boat pinned and pivoted simultaneously as I was luckily released without effort. I do not recall pulling my skirt, I just remember going further underwater lying on my back, looking back up through the murky water, and seeing Rebecca swimming at the entrance to the sieve. With a reasonable amount of force, I was jammed into a small crack about 15' underwater and became stuck.

Feeling surprisingly relaxed and clear-headed, I was completely present as the world flashed before me. Then the strangest thing I have ever experienced happened. The river surged for a brief time releasing me from my hold and I simultaneously rolled over and saw light through a small hole. I turned over and crawled through the hole that was just barely large enough to swim through, following the light.

I was in a place of complete darkness surrounded by black rock. All I could see was a small light getting bigger as I worked my way through the jumble. Fairly quickly the jumble of rocks turned into a massive rock ceiling with the light of the pool 15' to 20' away. I swam until I reached the pool.

In the pool, water was boiling up but no Rebecca. I did not know what to do. My shoulder was still out of its socket so I swam to shore with one arm, waiting feverishly for her to arise through the bubbles. She did not. I got out of the river and began climbing upstream over the rocks to find her on-shore, midway through the boulder pile.

She re-located my shoulder, and we sat quietly.

About five minutes later, the rest of the group caught up with us and asked how we were doing. I don't remember what we said but I felt calm and thankful to be alive. We climbed out of the gorge with the help of our group and went home.

I do not know if this story has a moral. I have always been in wonder at the danger inherent in kayaking, yet it has not outweighed the benefit of being on the river. Kayaking creates the space for being truly present with groups of friends and with the natural forces of the world. It seems to provide access to the fundamental nature of my humanity which is difficult to ascertain on a daily basis. I will always kayak, and I also trust the implicate order of the cosmos. I am thankful to be alive.

ATOM CRAWFORD ♦BOULDERS, BOOFS, AND A REMOTE CANYON

Upper Taos Box

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	300	450	800	1400
Character	sieves open	boof practice	rapids get juice	sieves with juice
Class	V-	V- (V)	V	V (V+ x2)
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★
Gradient	70 fpm			
Remoteness	commiting, with trail access			
Hitchability	poor, but okay bike shuttle if utilizing hike out at Little Arsenic			
Length	6.5 miles or 16 with paddle out to Dunn Bridge			
Season	March to June and multiple releases			
Gauge	Rio Grande near Lobatos			
Put-in	Chiflo or Bear Crossing			
Take-out	Little Arsenic Trail or Dunn Bridge			

The "Big River's" steepest section lies just south of the Colorado border, and at most-flows is a classic class V pool drop in the New Mexican desert. The Upper Box runs early and gets a small boost from diverted waters in Colorado, making it one of the regions first good spring creek runs. But don't get too excited. Agricultural interests lay claim to a fair portion of the Rio Grande upstream of this run and in all but the biggest of snow years this run remains at low to moderate flow levels throughout the short New Mexico season.

Although the canyon walls are steep and the desert terrain rugged a few put-in and take-out options exist. An easy downhill hike and a little more warm-up time begins at the Chiflo Trail. At low water a steeper and more demanding downhill slide allows you to put-in a mile or so closer to the named drops from Bear Crossing picnic area. From here there are few exit options so come prepared for a wilderness run with spare paddles, first-aid and a sieve removal kit. Inspect the rocks that form the first few rapids and consider the forces that shaped this metamorphic basalt into Swiss cheese and sieves of all shapes and sizes. Proceed with caution.

All of the significant rapids of this run are steep boulder drops made of the angular basalt that has dropped from the cliffs near the rim of the gorge. The toughest drops tend to be short in nature with somewhat defined pools. The rest of the drops are longer sieve-dodging affairs where you can eddy hop, look over your shoulder and find the next open line through the maze. All of the rapids which require one can be scouted from obvious horizon lines with the exception of Hell Hole. Look for a patch of tall pine trees on the left which designate this ledge that is backed up by a large boulder blocking the right two thirds of the channel.

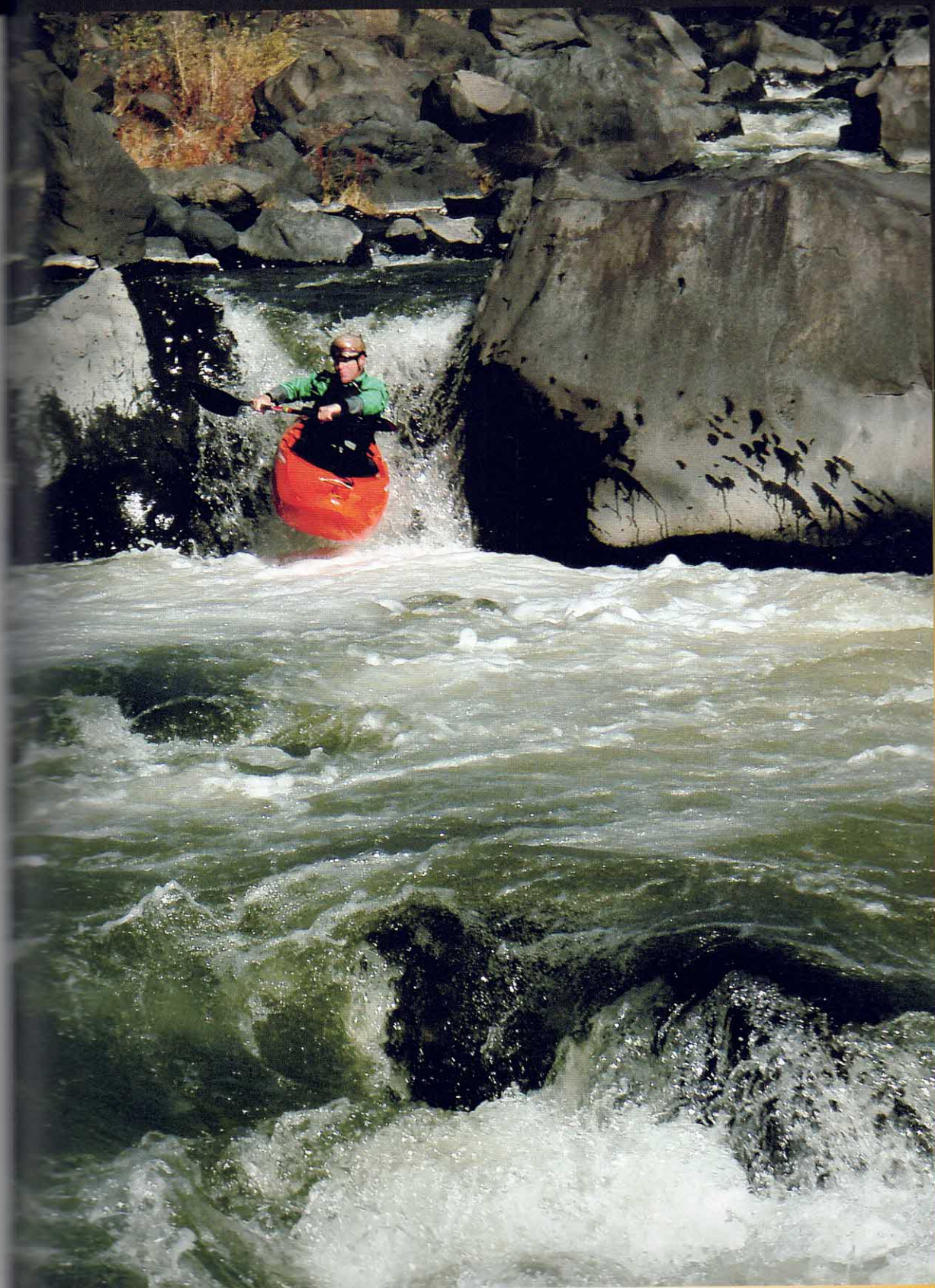
Continuous steep whitewater unfolds and is broken up by a flat section known as the Great Calm. Beyond the calm another mile of pushy boogie water leads to the short but defined pool above Big Arsenic Rapid, recognizable from the only pine tree at river level on the left in this section. Scout on the right at a small grassy flat. At low flows a technical right entrance leads to a strong move into the left channel and a fast run-out with a surprisingly sticky hole. The left channel allows a technical sneak route at low flows. As the flow rises the preferred line shifts from right to left. More continuous boating follows with multiple dangerous sieves and dead end routes through Little Arsenic Rapid. If you do not know the line through Little Arsenic extreme heads up boat scouting should be exercised.

Your first exit option appears a few minor rapids below Little Arsenic, downstream of the Arsenic Hot Spring. A notoriously ambiguous take-out at a grassy flat, below a large dead tree missing its top half, mark the Little Arsenic trail—a steep 750 feet of elevation gain in .8 miles (read switchbacks). If you take out too early you'll mistakenly hike up the Big Arsenic trail. At the top of the Little Arsenic trail is the best camping in the area. The other take-out is at Dunn Bridge, 8.5 miles downstream, about half of which is painfully flat but no less scenic.

Directions

To get to the take-out, turn west of off Hwy 522 at Arroyo Hondo just south of Questa. Take the dirt road through Arroyo Hondo following the Rio Hondo down to the Dunn Bridge and free hot springs. To get to the put-in go back out to Hwy 522 and head north to Cerro. Turn west onto Rd 378 and look for the Chiflo Trailhead or Bear Crossing picnic area on your right along the canyon rim. The best camping and the top of the Little Arsenic Trail take-out are at the apex of the Rd 378 loop about six miles from the Chiflo put-in.

COME PREPARED FOR A WILDERNESS RUN WITH SPARE PADDLES, FIRST-AID AND A SIEVE REMOVAL KIT. INSPECT THE ROCKS AND CONSIDER THE FORCES THAT SHAPED THIS METAMORPHIC BASALT INTO SWISS CHEESE.



Toltec Gorge & Red River

Toltec Gorge

The Toltec Gorge isn't a very friendly place. Found one-drainage south of the Conejos, the Rio de Los Pinos is tucked deep inside a narrow gorge. The partially runnable and marginally portageable section drops 500 fpm, is hard to move around in, and far from easily escapable. Ironic, since close-by is a tourist trap narrow-gauge train. The level on this run is highly sensitive, requiring the perfect mixture of water and rock to keep things navigable—avoiding suicidal high water or pin fest mank. As Jared Johnson once said after returning from an epic high water trip, "I wish I was good enough to run that."

The group, which included a handful of very good paddlers from the Four Corners area, was one of the few to attempt the run since its inception in the bible, and with good reason. It's a committing and technical run, with certain levels creating inhospitable paddling conditions with a solid NR rating. This was the cause of the brutal hike out above a massive drop, with the first member of the group reaching the would-be take-out at 5:30 am the next day. The run hasn't been attempted since to my knowledge.

If this sounds like a fantastic adventure, then be prepared for the rugged terrain, technical portaging with ropes, and a tedious paddle out once successfully completing the gorge. Enjoy.

CFS	150<optimal<250
Class	V+ (NRs)<250<NR
Quality	★★
Gradient	500 fpm crux
Length	8.8 miles
Season	well after peak
Gauge	visual
Put-in	near Osier, CO
Take-out	CG on FR 284

Directions: Start at the town of Los Pinos, south of Antonito and to the west of Hwy 285. From here, take FR 87A that parallels the river (allowing a river level flow check) on the way to San Miguel, and then another two miles on FR 284 to the CG which serves as the take-out.

To reach the put-in, continue west on FR 284 for 1.2 miles, veer right up a jarring road, and then left onto a better road that leads to the Osier train stop. Drive downstream until as close to the gorge entrance as possible, and hike if necessary.

Jared Johnson ♦ High water in the Toltec

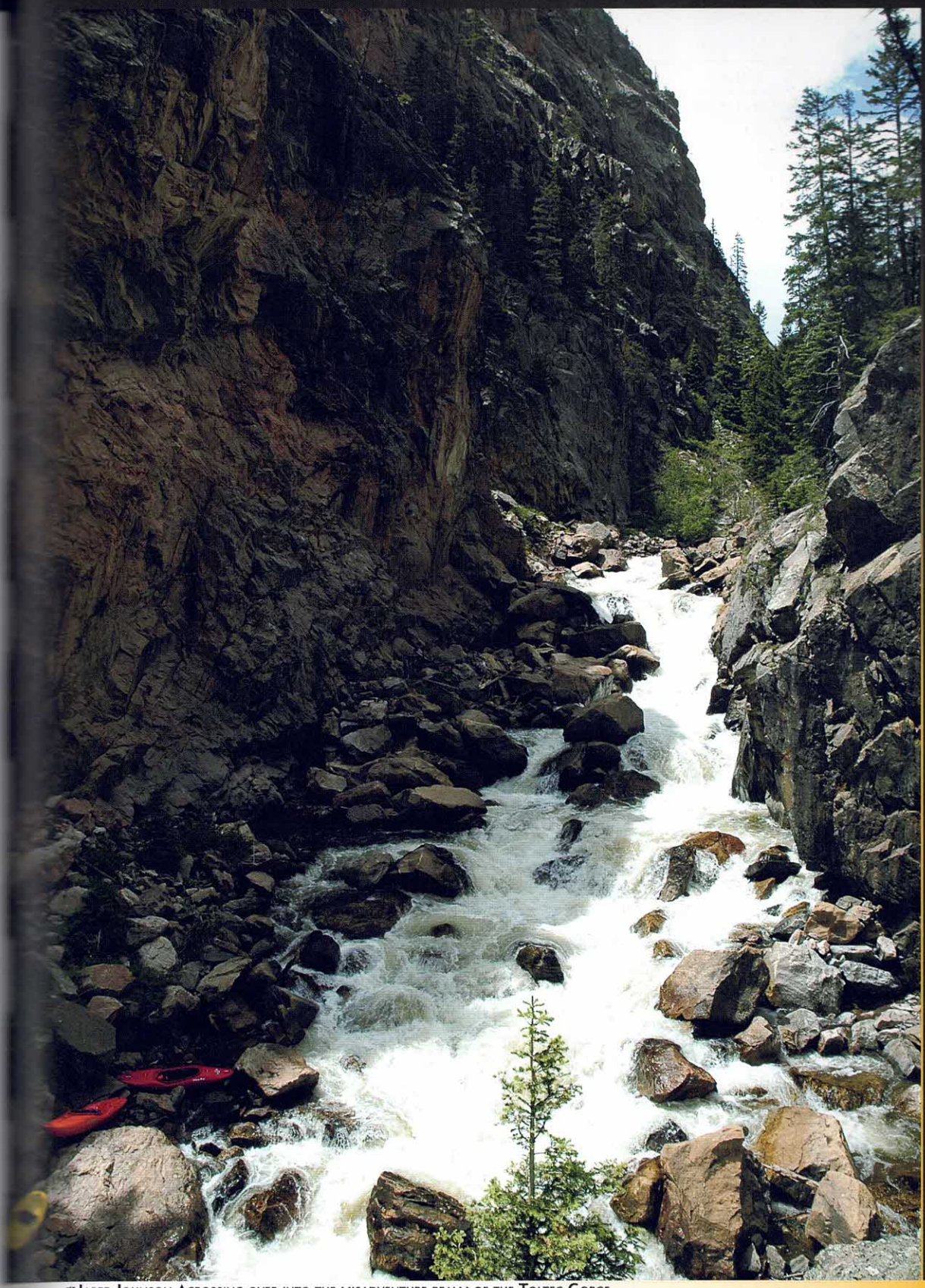
Red River

The Red is a straight forward intermediate creek run in a non-threatening but beautiful canyon. Wood can be an issue, but what creek in the Rockies doesn't have a wood issue? There is a very short window for this run to be of any value and some years it doesn't even get to a worthy level. If everything is peaking in the area then it is probably a go. There is a gauge at the put-in just below the fish hatchery. A cool day might be spent lounging in the shade a mile or two into the run, getting your line wet and hopefully catching some lunch – that is if you can find a pool (don't forget the pocket stove, butter and mini-frying pan for best results). You'll need the protein energy boost because the Red joins up with the Rio Grande just in time for the Upper Taos Box paddle out (below all of the good rapids) to Dunn Bridge. It shouldn't be too bad with the higher area flows necessary for this run.

CFS	200<min<250<best
Class	IV+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	130 fpm
Length	3.5 miles plus 12 out
Season	peak
Gauge	Red Riv blw Fish Hatch
Put-in	Red Riv Fish Hatchery
Take-out	Dunn Bridge

Directions: Off of Hwy 522 south of Questa take Rd 515 (512) west to the Red River Fish Hatchery. This is the put-in. The take-out is at the Dunn Bridge found by going back out to Hwy 522, turning right (west) at Arroyo Hondo and driving the dirt road down to the big river. There are hot springs here on river right downstream of the bridge.

This was the cause of the brutal hike out above a massive drop, with the first member of the group reaching the would-be take-out at 5:30 am the next day. The run hasn't been attempted since.

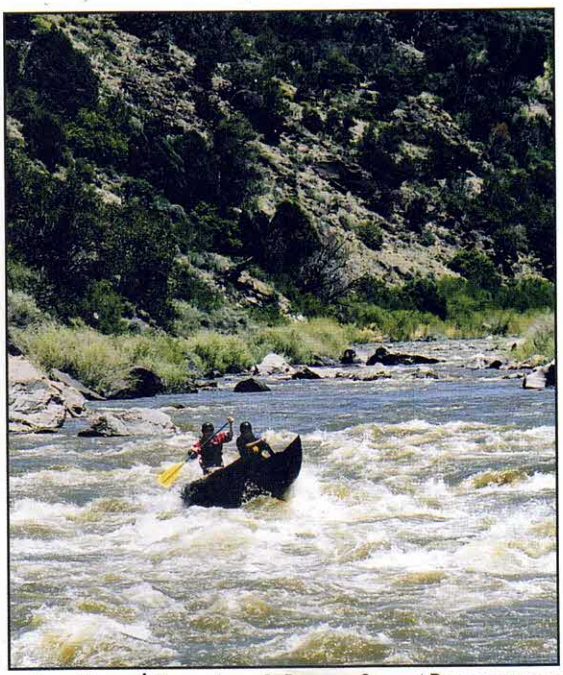


Jared Johnson ♦crossing over into the misadventure realm of the Toltec Gorge

Lower T-Box & Pilar Local

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	400	1000	2000	3000
Character	you must be local	Pilar play	desert wash	big muddy waves
LT Box Class	III+	III (IV x2)	III+ (IV x2)	III+ (IV x2)
Pilar Class	III-	III+	IV-	IV
LT Box Quality	★	★★	★★★	★★★
Pilar Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★
Gradient	30 fpm			
Remoteness	high for Lower T-Box, roadside for Pilar			
Hitchability	fair with other paddlers for Lower T-Box, good for Pilar			
Length	14 miles T-Box, 4.8 Pilar			
Season	April to June			
Gauge	Rio Grande below Taos Junction Bridge (minus Rio Pueblo near Taos for T-Box)			
Put-in	Dunn Bridge or Taos Junction Bridge			
Take-out	Taos Junction Bridge or Taos County Line Access			

While traveling south on Hwy 522 the change of environment is noticeable. A swerve around a herd of wild horses interrupts a late night drive, rather than the typical deer dodging in Colorado. A late night cruise through Costilla and then Questa confirms that the night scene is limited in these parts of New Mexico. This is one of the few areas where small mansions share property lines with trailer homes. This merits a few fleeting thoughts—but the gas-peddle keeps the crew headed towards Taos. Once in town the action is slightly livelier, as a crew of trust-fund homies rolls by with chrome rims on a beater Cadillac, and the smell of amazing Mexican food fills the night air—an oddly welcoming environment for the travel weary. Continuing south the road weaves through a pinon forest before passing by fields of grapes—the crucial ingredient and lifeblood of the local wineries. The end of the line, and the start of a few crucial hours of sleep can be found near Pilar, the geographically chosen town at the center of the Rio Grande whitewater—complete with miles of beginner action, good high-water freestyle, and top-notch creek boating. An early spring road-trip to New Mexico kicks off the season with warm temps, cool whitewater, cheap beer, and roasted green chillies.



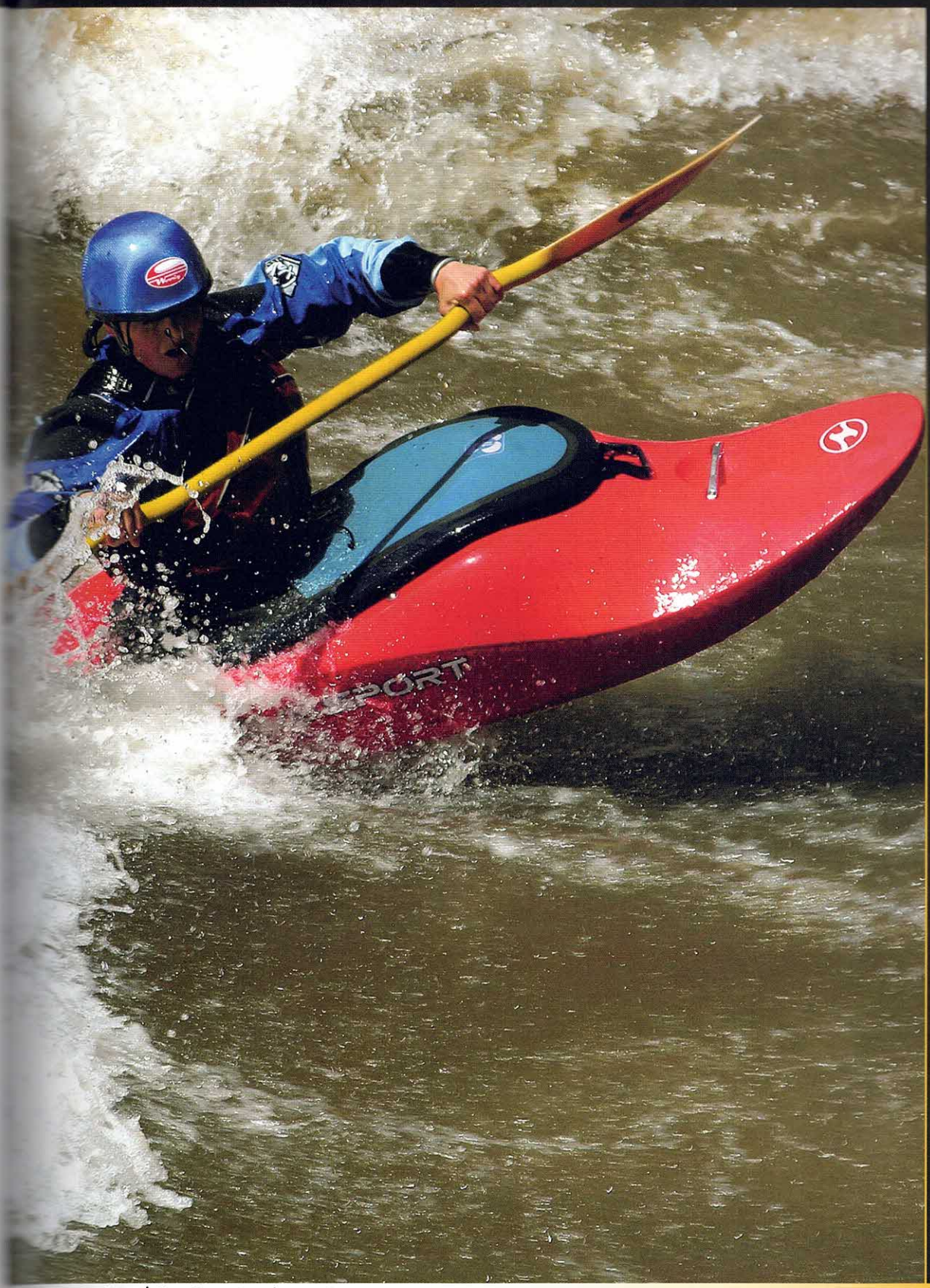
Alex Henes Bobby Lutz & Roberta Smith Pilar river toys

Lower Taos Box

West of Taos and below Dunn Bridge the Rio Grande continues its scenic course through the 650' deep gorge known as the Box. Though this run is 14 miles long there are only six significant rapids, five of which appear during the last third of the run. Translation—there is a great deal of flatwater in the middle providing ample time for rafters to enjoy and photograph the amazing scenery but providing experienced kayakers with mainly cramped legs and bored looks.

About 3.5 miles into the run Ski Jump rapid is a welcome respite from the gradient starved first few miles. After Ski Jump you can lay back and study the engineering prowess that was required to string the steel arched Gorge Bridge across the canyon. After six or seven more miles of blank gradient you will see a set of power lines come into view marking the top of Dead Car Rapid. The next drop is Powerline Rapid. Dead Car Rapid is more significant at low water, while Powerline becomes more prominent at higher flows. Scout accordingly.

An early spring road-trip to New Mexico kicks off the season with warm temps, cool whitewater, cheap beer, and roasted green chillies.



NM • Lower Taos Box & Pilar Local

Jen Ross Katie Selby surf's up at Pilar

Pilar & Rio Pueblo

The next set of rapids begins with Pinball and is followed by two more rapids, Screaming Left and Right hand turns respectively. Raft guides will want to replace the names of the last two rapids with creative ones of their own liking (just look to a class V run and steal one or two from there, the customers will never know the difference). The Lower Taos Box requires a permit which is reservation and fee free, obtained from the ranger at the put-in (Dunn Bridge).

Pilar

The Pilar or Racecourse run is the standard roadside run of the Rio Grande. Class III+ rapids with play and easy scouting, access and shuttle logistics make this a favorite for all types of crafts at moderate flows. There is awesome play at Souse Hole above 900 cfs. At high water Class IV ensues and there are some large hydraulics that may thrash the timid. At flows greater than 2500 cfs, the Glen Woody Bridge early in the run becomes a hazard (portage left—private property right). This is not a run where you will find seclusion, but the scenery is typical of the beautiful Taos area runs. An annual Mother's Day Race is a great time to enjoy this run, especially if you think you might enjoy the combination of fresh roasted green chiles and juicy class III desert action.

Directions

To get to the Lower Box take-out from Taos take Hwy 68 south towards Pilar. Turn onto Hwy 570 at Pilar and follow the river to the Taos Junction Bridge. There is pay and party camping on the south side of the bridge and free and peaceful (maybe) camping on the north side. To get to the Lower Box put-in go back to Hwy 68 and head north to Hwy 522. Turn west of off Hwy 522 at county road B007 just south of Arroyo Hondo. Follow this road down to the Dunn Bridge and hot springs.

To get to the Racecourse put-in take Hwy 68 south from Pilar to the Quartzite Access at mm 28.1. The take-out is about 5 miles further south on Hwy 68 at the Taos County Line Access.

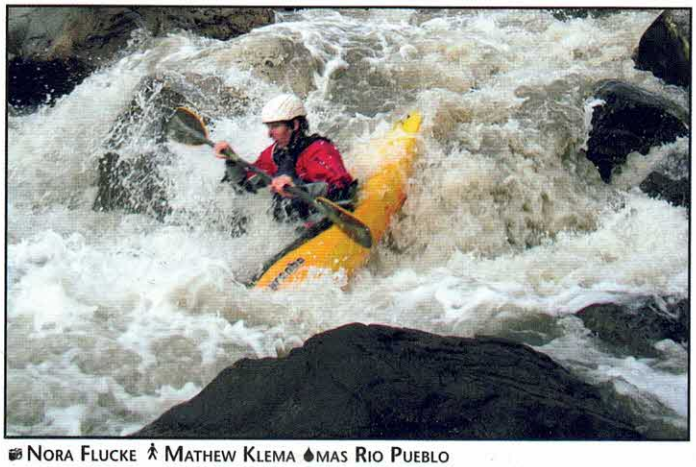
Rio Pueblo

If a trip to New Mexico suddenly blunders into high water on the Embudo, or by the rare chance Front Range style low-volume mank is your cup of tea, then this is the Plan B. The Rio Pueblo is a good run, and if it were located anywhere accept next to the Embudo, it would be considered a classic. But, instead its relegated to the rank of being a good but chunky run at low flow, and flooded-creek-style hairball at higher levels.

Nine hundred cfs justifies putting-in at the top, at a 4WD road found leading away from Hwy 570, about two miles upstream of the landslide. The permanent closure of this part of Hwy 570 requires paddlers to drive a long shuttle on Hwy 68, or to exercise the hike-and-huck option from the take-out. Besides voiding a long shuttle, hiking the bottom mile accesses the crux whitewater of the run—which has an SSV meets NM character. Think low riders, cowboy boots, and tequila.

And then the water gets high. At high water the bottom mile gets lethal, with two rapids of note that should be approached with caution and a good accent, Timmy's Temptation (V+) and Brett's Shoulder (V+). Scout them on the way up, at points where the river leaves the road—or portage if the water was high enough to paddle the upper. Extensive scouting will be required, and portages exist even at low flows.

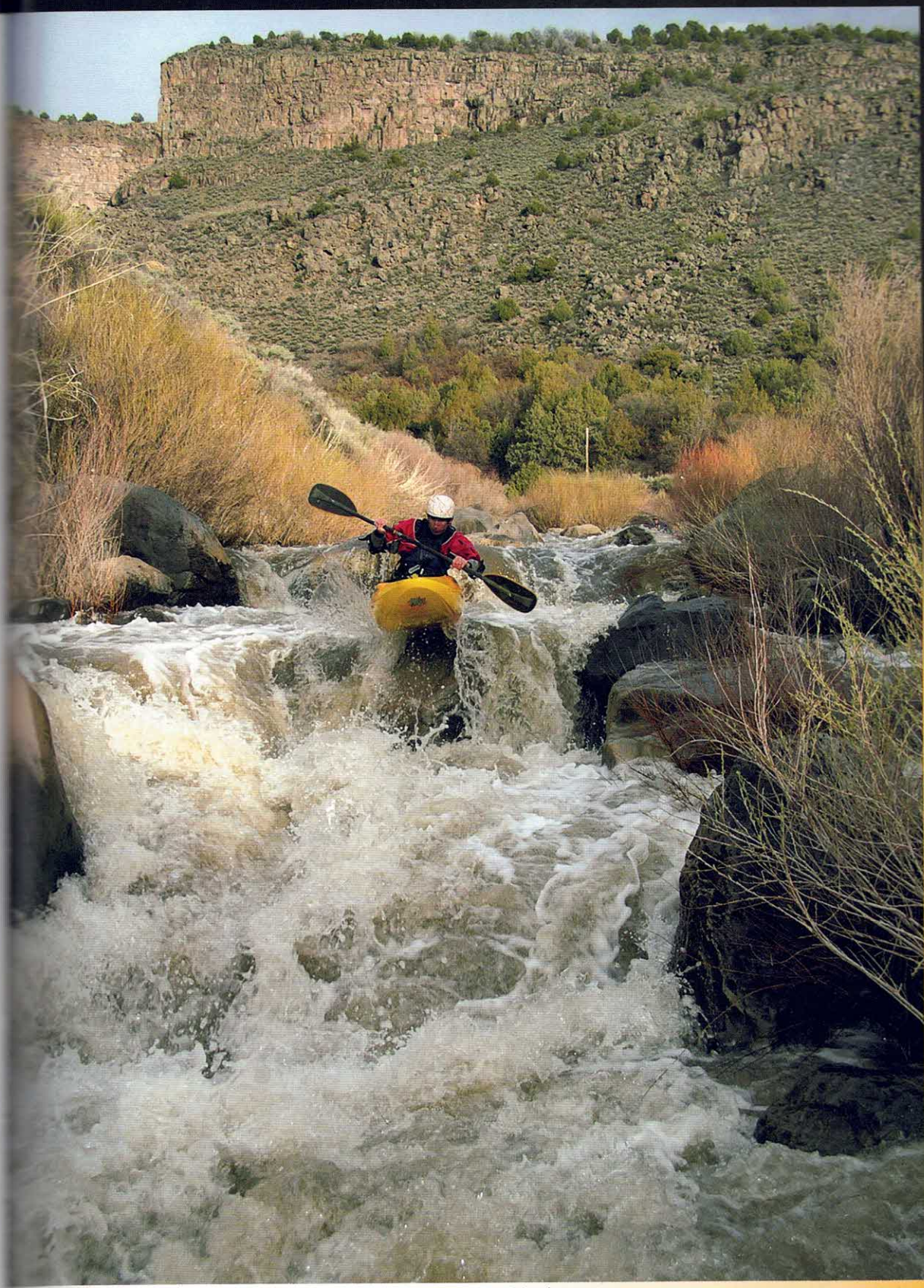
Directions: Park at the take-out of the Lower Taos Box, and then hike up the closed Hwy 570 until the river calms shortly above the landslide (while still roadside). If running the shuttle, take Hwy 68 to Hwy 240 northeast to the north side of Hwy 570 and turn left. In 2.9 miles turn right on the dirt road, bounce right at the first fork, and bounce left at the second—remembering the 4WD rig in advance.



Nora Flucke Mathew Klema Mas Rio Pueblo

CFS	250<min 600<low<900<yeeha
Class	V-<900<V<1400<NR (V+ & NRs @ all levels)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	270 fpm crux
Length	1 mile (3.5 from top)
Season	May, early June
Gauge	Rio Pueblo blw Los Cordovas
Put-in	above landslide
Take-out	Taos Junction Bridge

The Pilar run is the standard roadside class III+ of the Rio Grande. An early season trip to the nearby town is practically the best way for novice paddlers to dust off the cobwebs.



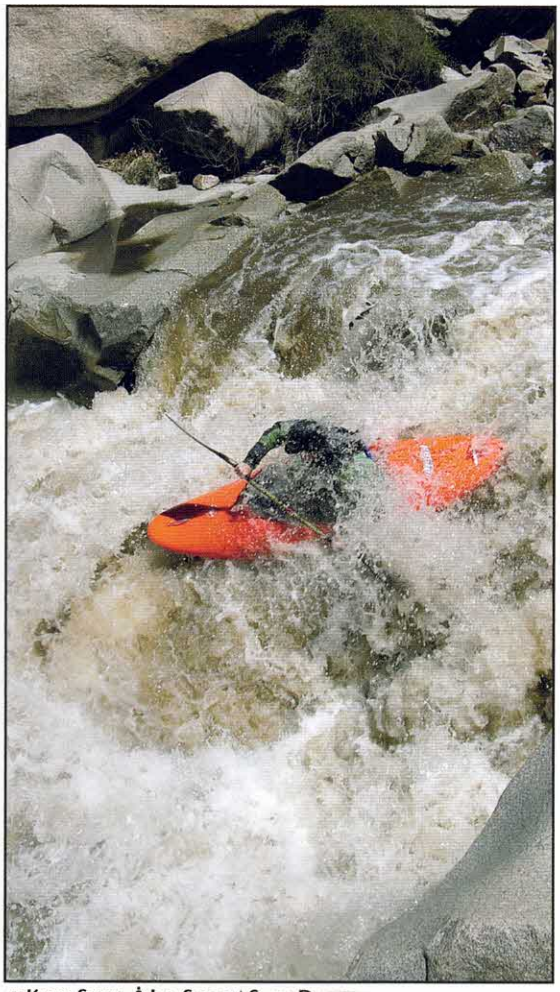
Nora Flucke Mathew Klema Timmy's Temptation we think—Matt's too busy boofing to remember the name

Rio Embudo

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	2.65′	2.9′	3.3′	3.7′
Character	hot	very hot	extra hot	Embudo Hot
Class	V- (V)	V	V (V+)	V+
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	260 fpm crux			
Remoteness	high			
Hitchability	poor, okay with other boaters			
Length	5 miles			
Season	April, May, June, rain			
Gauge	Rio Embudo near Dixon			
Put-in	off Hwy 70			
Take-out	arroyo off CR 0068			

Embudo—to Funnel. Funnel—to move or direct something into and through a narrow space.

This is what this tight basalt canyon does, and it's a classic. When the spring snow starts to drain the Blood of Christ Mountains in Northern New Mexico it is time to head south. Stop at the Pilar Yacht Club for a tasty breakfast burrito. On my first run down the Rio Embudo it was the fresh roasted green chilies that saw me through the heart of the gorge.



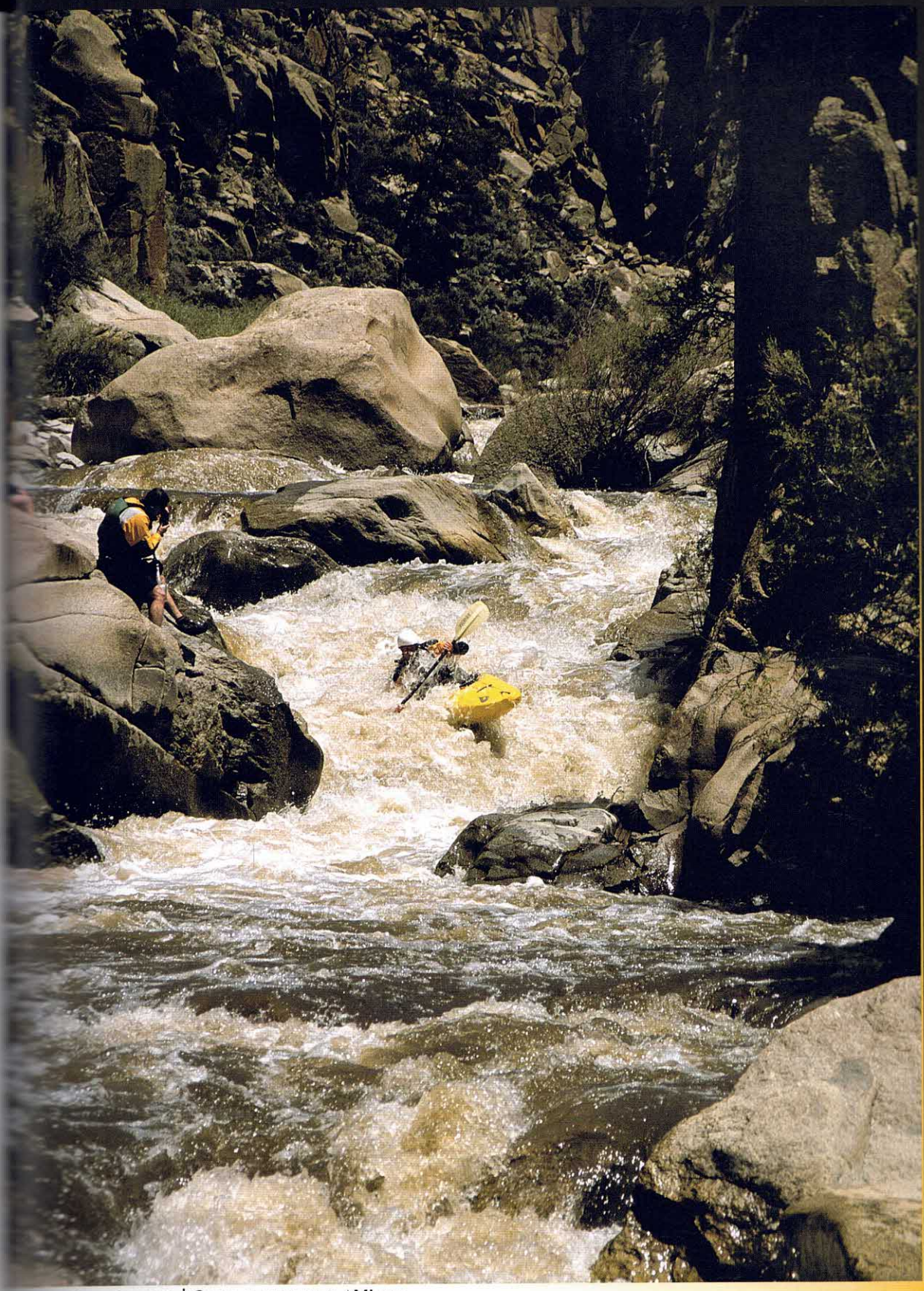
Katie Selby Jed Selby Slam Dance

There is a nice warm-up before the real action starts. The intensity increases as you approach a very continuous section of whitewater titled Long Rapid. I personally don't know where Long Rapid starts, or really where it ends—not that it matters. It is just solid, heads up boating that can be read-and-run by competent class V paddlers, although it does become increasingly more intense at higher flows. From here the rapids are sustained until the end of the upper gorge. The next significant rapid of note is Cheesegrater, a powerful sliding falls with a nice boof at the entrance. MJ Falls, found two corners below Cheesegrater, can sneak up on you, but a good hidden eddy is available on river right behind a pointy house size boulder. This rapid is not that hard, but mildly ugly—due to a strong hole that feeds into a hungry undercut. This is the easiest portage of the run and many people choose to walk (especially if you just watched your buddy go under the rock, which to say the least, looks uncomfortable).

After MJ you paddle a short distance through moving whitewater as you exit the upper gorge. If your plate was full through the upper gorge or the water felt high and pushy, look for a notch in the gorge high on river-left where there is an easy hike-out option before reaching the lower gorge.

After the notch you have two more corners before you enter the ultra continuous last mile of the run. There are two significant moves through Slam Dance, a wild corner and entrance to the Slots of Fun. Depending on the level, Slam Dance will be more or less harrowing. It is always intense. Slots of Fun contains no less than four

When the spring snow starts to drain the Blood of Christ Mountains in Northern New Mexico it is time to make the southern pilgrimage. Desert creeking's roots.



Jared Johnson Gordo setting safety MJ crux

beefy moves that must be negotiated before funneling through the main Slot drop. Once clear of this formality the endless whitewater continues for a 1/2-mile through Taco-Garden. Taco-Garden will mellow as you approach the take-out arroyo on the left. Walk up the arroyo a few hundred yards to your shuttle rig.

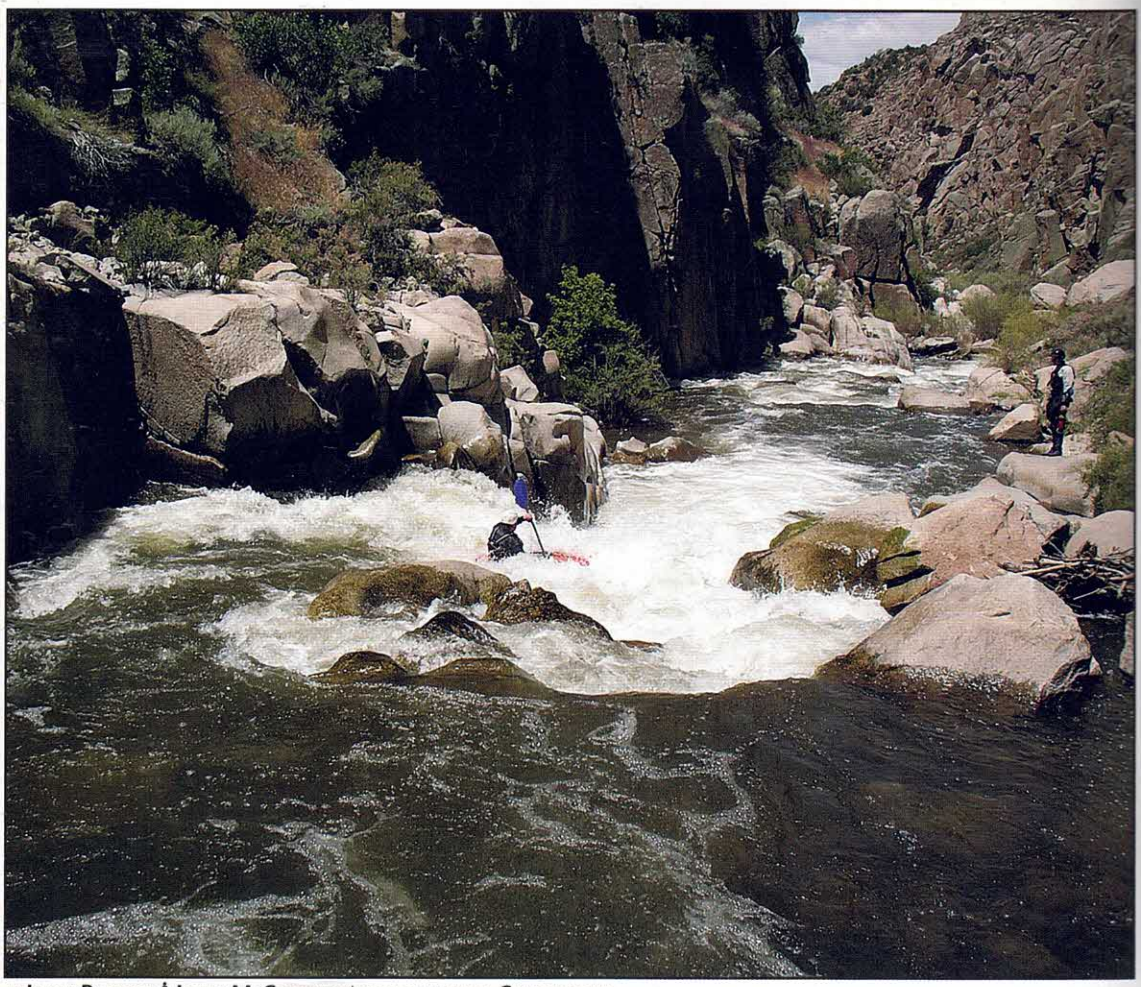
Scouting and portaging in the upper gorge are best done on the right for all of the major drops, except Long Rapid. Scouting in the lower gorge is best done on the left. If you are not up for Slam Dance or the Slot but still want to paddle the rest, the best portage route is on the left, followed by a ferry above the meatiest hole, and a continuation of the portage on the right.

The Embudo is an excellent river for the seasoned paddler. At medium to high flows a swim would almost certainly result in a loss of some if not all of your gear. The canyon is remote and the terrain is harsh. Hiking out with your boat is not recommended, except at the aforementioned escape route. A guide is helpful to cut down on scouting time and to avoid being flushed into a major rapid without a proper scout. Enjoy.

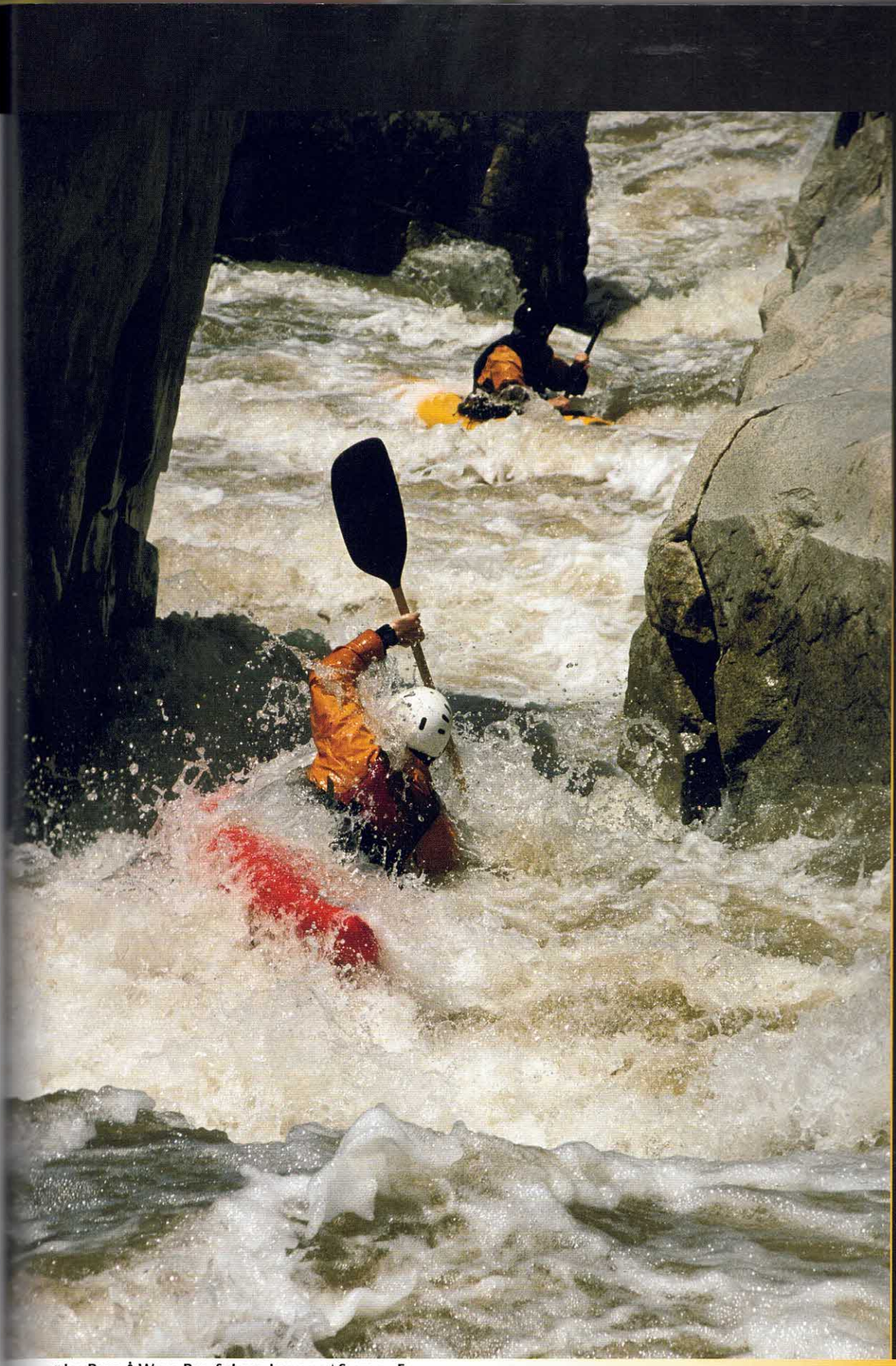
Directions

To get to the take-out, head east on Hwy 75 (70) off of Hwy 68 near Embudo. Just before crossing over the creek at a second bridge, go right onto Hwy 580 (CR 0068). About two miles up Hwy 580, after a few big dips, the road will turn to dirt and there is a fork in the road. Veer right at the fork and continue .4 miles up to an unmarked dirt road on the left. Follow this road a short bumpy ways down to a small arroyo. This is the take-out described in the first edition of CRC and after a hiatus it has become an acceptable take-out again.

The put-in is found by going back to Hwy 75 (70) and heading east (uphill) 6.6 miles to another unmarked dirt turn off. The way to find it is to look for the second road on the right just after you crest the last hill and begin a descent towards Rio Lucio. The correct put-in road will test your hopefully 4WD vehicle for about a mile, before coming to a grassy area with views of the high Sangres and Rio Lucio. Park here and head a steep couple hundred yards down to the creek avoiding the Rattle Snakes.



Jason Roberts Jimmy McGriffiths bottom half of Cheesegrater



NM • Rio Embudo

Jen Ross Willie Pell & Jared Johnson Slots of Fun crux

Santa Cruz

Wait for a wet snow year in Northern New Mexico, grab your Spanish translation book for the road trip south and get some of the best early season creeking in the Rockies. If you've got a couple of days and you're looking for a scenic after the drive class IV warm-up run look no further. The Santa Cruz is a continuous creek run that drops a steep mile through a tiny road-less area before dumping into a small reservoir. There is a visual foot gauge approximately twenty five strokes from the put-in on river left. Check it out from the river right shore where you can still turn around if the gauge reads anything below 2.3 ft. You are definitely hoping for something more like 3 feet. There is a trail river right that leads back up to the put-in bridge and will aid in any scouts that you choose to do. If you are not familiar with the willow grab above the wood eddy system you may want to scout a fair bit. This is the after work training ground for the Santa Fe locals. The first bigger type drop changed significantly during a recent flood (post CRC) and the right side of the island is now the preferred channel. There are two other bigger type drops (IV) shortly below. Boogie the second 1/2- mile down to the reservoir and race to the cars and cervezas. If you have none of your own, smile and ask the local picnickers politely in broken Spanish for one of theirs and you might just get one. Always be friendly with the locals but don't be afraid to taunt your parched friends while pounding your chilled and newly acquired Tecate.

CFS	100<min<200<best
Class	IV+<200<V
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	195 fpm
Length	1 mile
Season	May, June peak
Gauge	under put-in bridge
Put-in	Cundiyo, NM
Take-out	Santa Cruz Reservoir

Directions: Put in at the bridge above the canyon just north of Cundiyo on Hwy 503 (located off of Hwy 285 north of Santa Fe). The take-out is farther north on Hwy 503 and then west on Rd 596 down to the picnic area on the north end of Santa Cruz Lake (reservoir).

Guadalupe

This is a run most famous for Atom Crawford's legendary footage of Ed Lucero dropping possibly the gnarliest section of creek in the book in a Rasta flavored Wave Sport Descente. This beautifully ugly cascade of roadside sickness is referred to as the Vertical Monkey. Upstream there is a pretty descent creek run that is great for the small but vibrant Santa Fe creeking community. This is a mostly class IV creek run but you've got to be on your game for the constantly shifting wood, a couple of easy class V rapids and one highly non-recommended drop with a fun post portage otter slide river right. Make sure you know where the take-out is because without the proper meditation in the staging eddy, dropping into the Vertical Monkey might put you between a rock and hard place surrounded by muddy water.

CFS	120<min
Class	IV (NR)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	140 fpm
Length	2 miles
Season	May, June peak
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Hwy 485

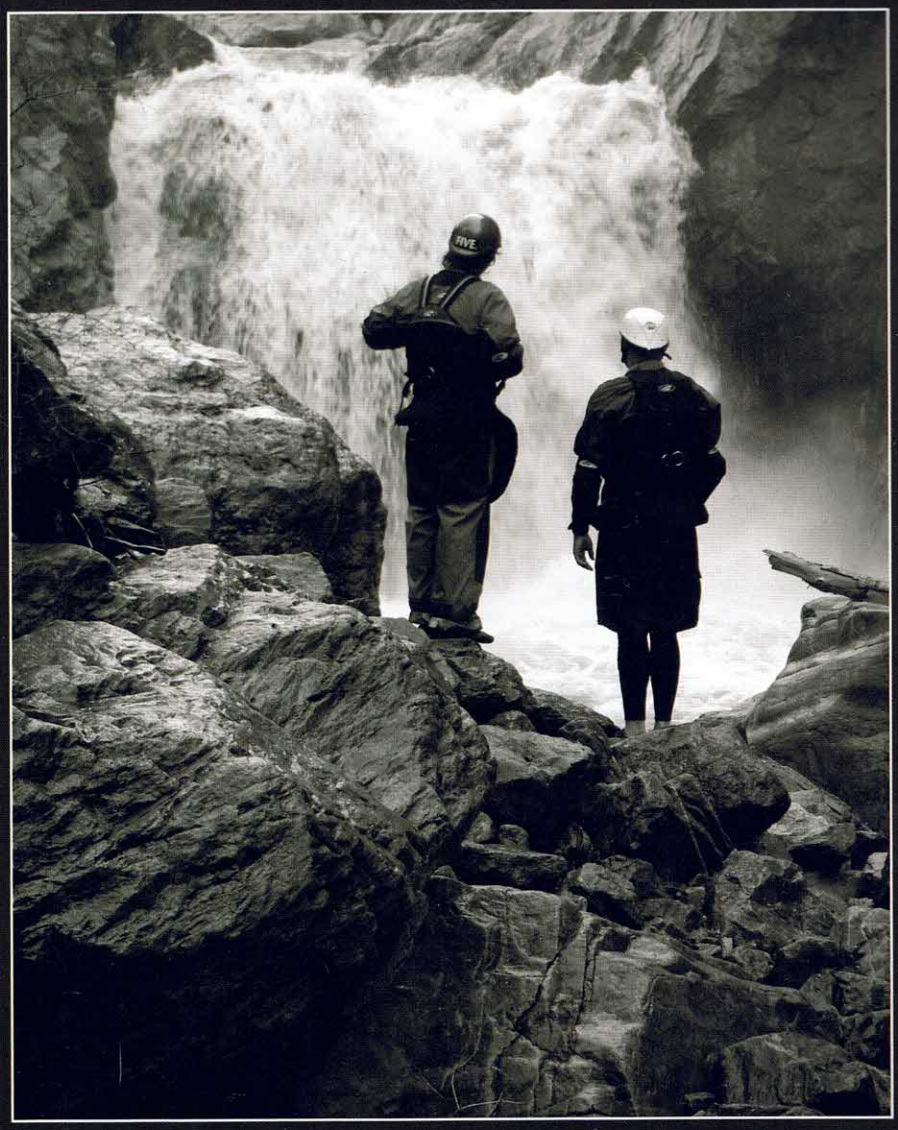
Directions: From I-25 south of Santa Fe head west on Hwy 550 at Bernalillo. Turn right (north) when you see a sign for San Ysidro onto Hwy 4. After you pass Canon on Hwy 4 look for Hwy 485 on the left. Turn onto 485 and follow it up passed two tunnels and pull over to see the meat. This is the Vertical Monkey. The regular take-out is almost a mile up after the road turns to dirt. Mark your take-out. The put-in is further up on the now dirt Hwy 485 at the first bridge you come to.

Rio de los Trampas (no beta box)

Eric Bader asked me if I was going to include everything in this book, and then laughed as he said, "I have one that you shouldn't include, the Rio Trampas." Apparently, Bader and Joel Serra ran this side tributary of the Embudo run (the trickle that flows in below MJ Falls) years ago, and their simple beta recommending against it would have been a godsend to a group of paddlers led by local legend Atom. Although the adventure of doing it once was likely worth it, the team missed a prized day on the 3.6' Embudo as out-of-towners were routing it top-to-bottom.

If you'd rather scrape down 100 cfs than run the Emubudo, or any of the other fantastic area runs at high flow, then read on.

The whitewater is class V and extremely manky. River left offers risks of getting shot due to possible *agricultural* interests near the strange put-in town. The rapids are steep, there aren't many eddies, a few portages, barbed wire, brush, and a couple good drops before paddling out on the Emdubo. This tributary is worth mentioning as a side hike and lunch stop while paddling the Embudo.



"I gave my heart to the mountains the minute I stood beside this river with its spray in my face and watched it thunder into foam..."

-Wallace Stegner

North Platte Drainage

Roaring Fork

Another 2006 addition by the Routt County River Enforcement, the Roaring Fork of the North Platte rolls off the eastern face of the Mount Zirkel Wilderness southwest of Walden.

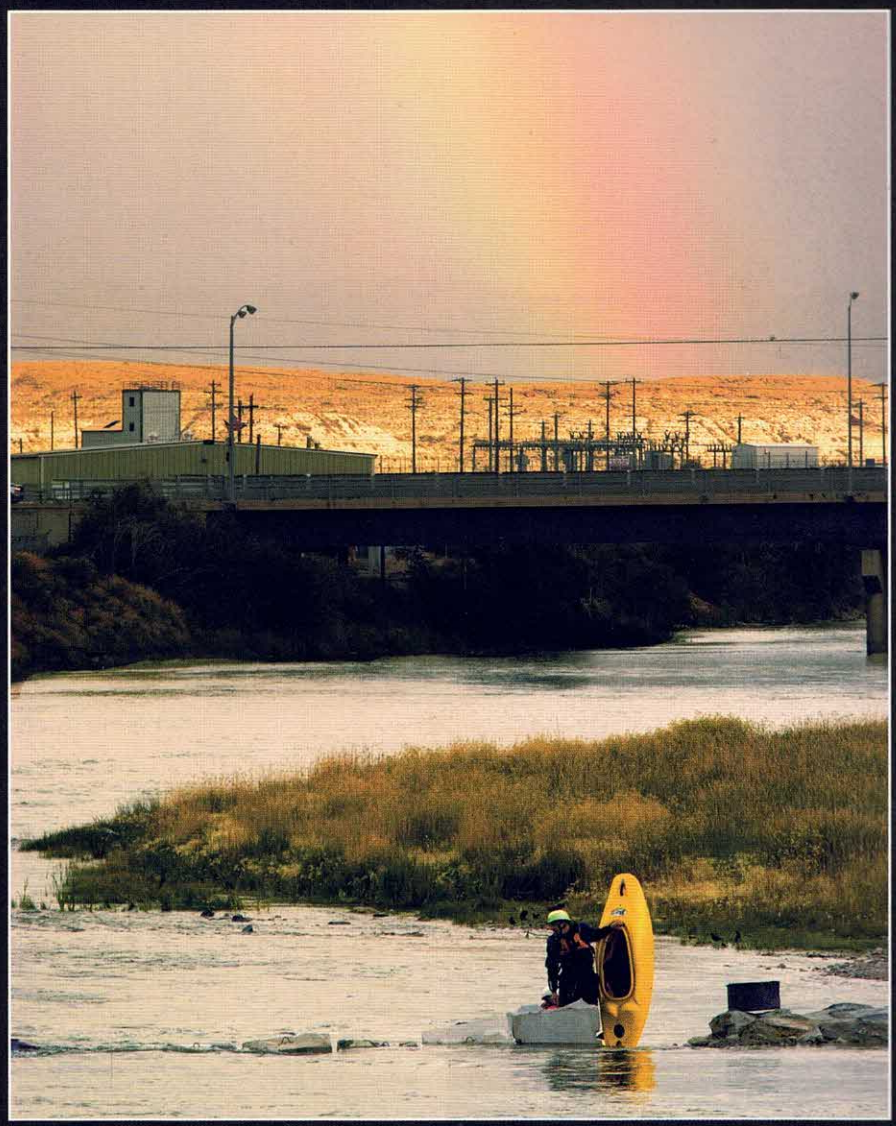
Bitch Slap Falls is a stout double 10′ to 22′ set, the final drop before the Roaring Fork finds a picturesque pond surrounded by classic C-to-the-Rocky-Mountain-O scenery. Bitch Slap is yet to be run cleanly through the first slot, as all RCRE members who attempted the huck got slapped. This hike-to run has solid potential for the adventure paddler willing to shoulder their load above BSF. The first 1/2-mile above BSF has been run. Multiple days are needed to run it from the top. Get some.

The drainage is fairly small so ample flows will only be found in years of heavy snow on Rabbit Ears Pass, when the rest of the early-season creeks in Steamboat are at or near peak.

Directions: From Walden leaving west stay on 12W Rd where Hwy 14/125 veers south. Veer left onto 18 Rd, and right on 20 Rd. Follow 20 Rd to the trailhead on river right. Start hiking as high as you want.

CFS	150<min
Class	V+
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	steep
Length	variable
Season	peak
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	20 Rd trail

KEVIN THOMPSON KEVIN FISHER GETTING BITCH SLAPPED



"In the right light, at the right time, everything is extroadinary."

-Aaron Rose

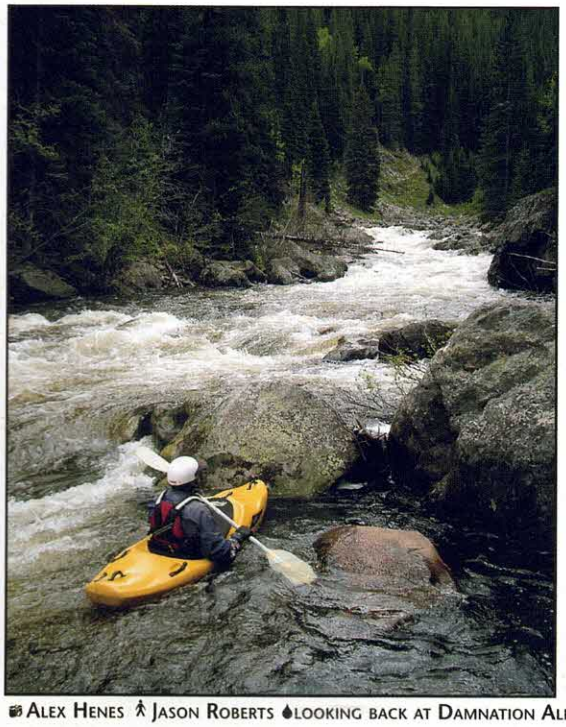
Adam Welch/adamwelch.net

Encampment River

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	300	400	800	1200
Character	brutal end	shure is purdy	I'll be damned	that's a cowboy
Class	IV-	IV	IV+	V- (V)
Quality	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	77 fpm, 150 fpm crux			
Remoteness	high, but trailside			
Hitchability	poor			
Length	15.2 miles			
Season	June, July			
Gauge	Encampment River near Encampment, WY			
Put-in	Hog/Commisary Park			
Take-out	Odd Fellows Trailhead			

Minor logging created the roads that access this stretch of the Encampment River, but it left most of the forest untouched. The pristine 15-mile section ranks high for the wilderness scenery, especially because it's usually only class IV. Trail 470 parallels river right, but it's unusual to see anyone but kayakers.

The Encampment has downfalls. Located just north of the Wyoming border, and on the northeast face of the Continental Divide, convenient road access is absent. Its best to plan on a long day of dirt-road Baja driving with snow banks, or better yet, hit the Encampment for a one-day layover while traveling between Colorado and Wyoming. The second bummer is the flatwater. The first six miles are a mellow warm-up, and the last four are brutally shallow and slow. Even at higher flows the run ends in disappointment.



Alex Henes ♗ Jason Roberts ♦ looking back at Damnation Alley

The middle of the run is top-notch class IV paddling. Entrance Falls is a fairly mellow slide, and exciting when Jared Johnson routes everyone through sans scout. The run-out leads into the first ledge of Damnation Alley. Five boulder-garden ledges get progressively bigger before it all drops into a long run-out. Consider taking a lunch break here. The gradient is consistent for the next few miles before things get dull.

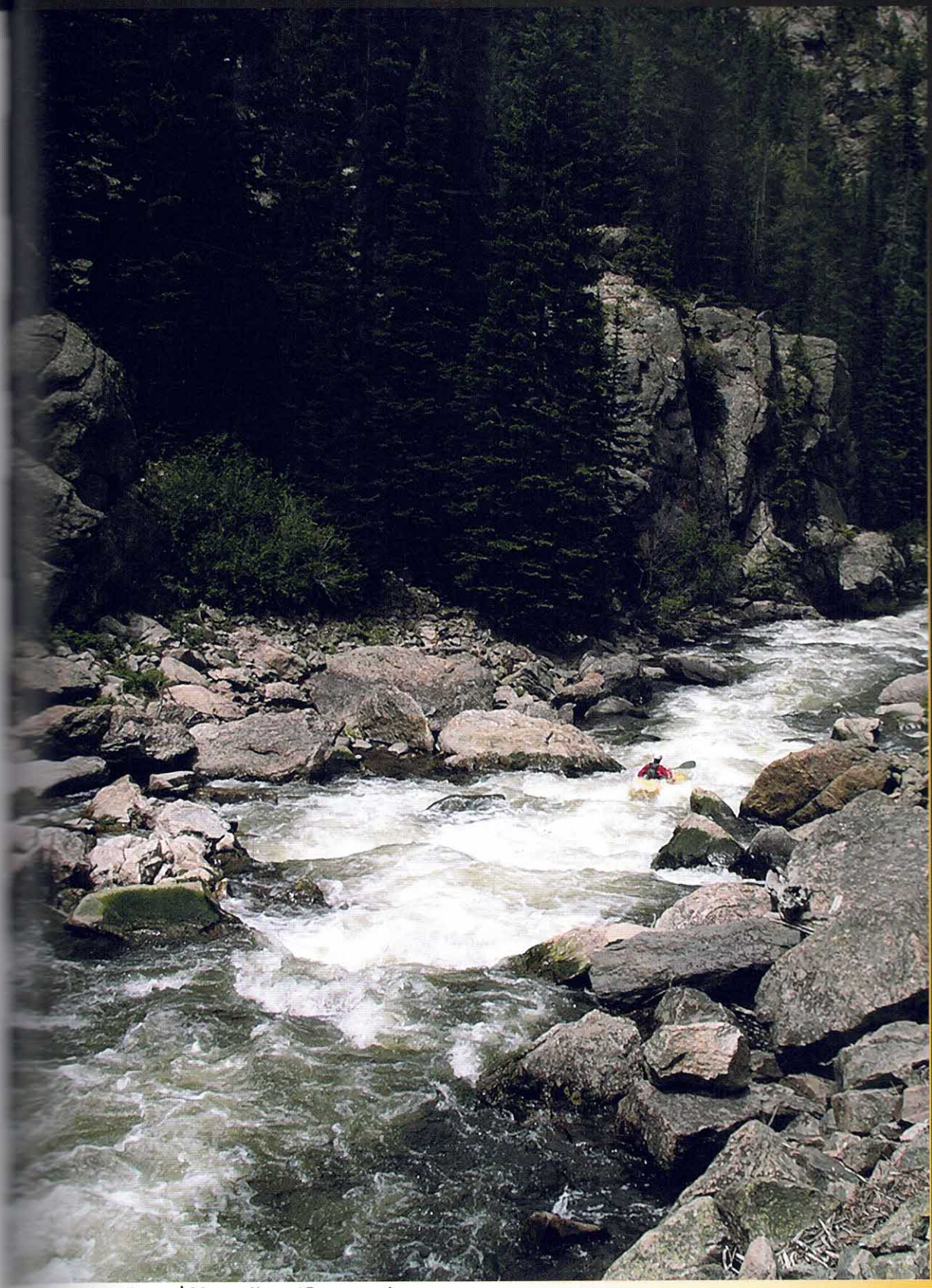
This is a great weekend retreat or one-day drive-by for paddlers wishing to get off the beaten path. Less skilled paddlers will find an easy cruise at low flow, but in a wilderness environment—an early test of one's stamina as a creek boater. Experts should aim for higher water to make the beginning and end of the run less taxing, and the whitewater more violent.

Update: As of summer 2006 a log was reported to be blocking a large part of Damnation Alley. Questions as to the runnability of the drop remain, so be heads up and scout well.

Directions

Getting to the area is the first task. It's possible to drive to the put-in first, by taking FR 496 north across the state line. The pass usually isn't open until mid-June because of snow. The more popular option is to start from Riverside, WY. Drive south on Hog Park Rd, and turn left onto BLM 3407 at a sign for Encampment River and Trail. Take out at the bridge near Odd Fellows CG. To get to the put-in, turn left on Hog Park Rd, or go back to Encampment, turn left on Hwy 70, then left on FR 550. Drive 20 miles to the Hog/Commissary Park parking lot, and put in.

A great weekend retreat or one-day drive-by for paddlers wishing to get off the beaten path, and immersed in the relatively untouched forests of southern Wyoming.



North Platte • Encampment River

Northgate Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	350	600	1200	1800
Character	pony	colt	horse	bronco
Class	III-	III	III+ (IV-)	III+ (IV-)
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★
Gradient	20 fpm			
Remoteness	high			
Hitchability	poor, okay with other boaters			
Length	10.8 miles			
Season	May-July, August			
Gauge	North Platte River near Northgate			
Put-in	Routt Launch			
Take-out	Six Mile Gap			

In the desolate country between Laramie and Walden, the North Platte meanders its way through the high elevation meadows of North Park. The river begins its long and unique descent north to the Mississippi by carving a wide gorge through a small chunk of the Medicine Bow Mountains. This is Northgate Canyon—an offering of classic Rocky Mountain beauty and solitude for those willing to make the trip. The whitewater is mild and the rapids are short lived but at high water the play can be worthy. But more than the whitewater, it is the excursion to this beautiful country that defines this run.

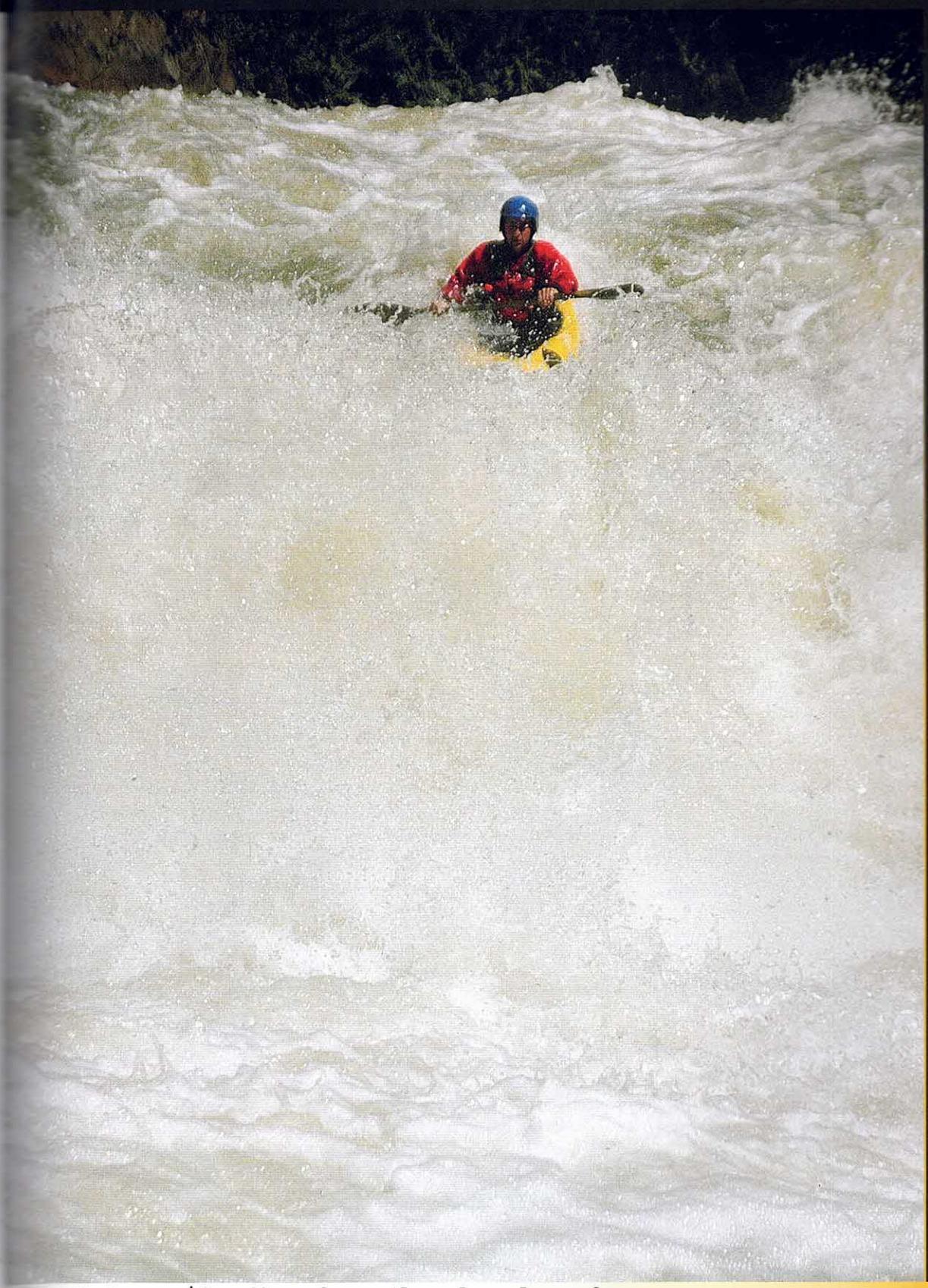
Decent campgrounds exist at both the take-out and the put-in, but be weary of the locals, or more likely the rafter party arriving early for a commercial trip the next morning. They will piss on your tent. Feel free to set their boom box on fire if they refuse to turn down the Phish after dark. A better option is to stay in or close to the nearby town of Saratoga, named in 1884 after an Iroquois Indian word *Sarachtoue*, roughly translated as "place of miraculous water in the rock." Miraculous is right, as there is a free hot springs in the center of town where you can soak till your heart is content 24-7. Head to Saratoga for a cool weekend of boating during peak run-off by hitting Northgate Canyon one day and then the Encampment the next.

The main rapids of the canyon come about seven miles in after passing Elkhorn Creek on river right. The toughest of the bunch is the second rapid, commonly referred to as Narrow Falls. It's pretty mellow for anyone possessing a strong roll. If in doubt, scout river left when you see a horizon line below a talus slope. A couple of other rapids exist but nothing gets tougher than class III+ at even the highest of flows. Look for the good play feature near the take-out at these flows. There is a ½-mile hike out of the run at the Six Mile Gap take-out that is quite steep for the out of shape commercial rafters. It is fun to laugh at them as they drag their tired carcasses from the hopefully swollen river. Feel free to poke the raft guides as you pass them on the trail. This run can be made into an overnighter, making it a great getaway for the intermediate paddler looking to self-support. An extension of the run is recommended when exercising this option, with a take-out at Pickaroon Campground. This lengthens the shuttle considerably.

Brian Ledoux ♦ Stovepipe Rapid

Directions

To get to the put-in from Walden, CO take Hwy 125 north to FR 896 and go right following Rd 896 to the Routt Launch Site. The take-out is found by taking Hwy 125 further north where it turns into WY Hwy 230. Take a right onto FR 492 and follow it down to the Six Mile Gap CG. To get to the Pickaroon CG take-out follow Hwy 230 further north to Hwy 130. Take a right (east) and head up and over the Snowy Range Pass to Hwy 11 and head south to Albany. From Albany, take FR 500 to the Keystone sign at FR 542. Continue east, first on FR 511, then on FR 512 (same road) for about 12 miles to the CG.



Leif Embertson Adrian Matthew Glasenapp Bucking Bronco, Bluegrass Creek

Bluegrass Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	250	300	375	450
Character	slow inbetween	drops open up	you just got served	oh its on
Class	V-	V	V	V+
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	230 fpm first 1/2-mile, 130 fpm Main Event Gorge			
Remoteness	high			
Hitchability	very poor			
Length	7 miles			
Season	August			
Gauge	Wheatland #2 outflow—307-742-7657 (auto) or 307-742-0023 (voice)			
Put-in	outflow of Wheatland Reservoir #2			
Take-out	Hwy 34 bridge			

Bluegrass Creek is a late season Wyoming run made possible by farmers who own the reservoir (Wheatland #2) above the runnable section. This is a long run with only two sections of interesting boating and a lot of barbwire. The good sections are interesting enough to make this a yearly event. You put in right below the tunnel that makes this run happen. The river just appears out of a hole in the hill and drops right into a sweet 1/2-mile of the good stuff. Walk over the tunnel and scout this whole section from river right.

From the put-in it is a constricted and continuous shallow gorge through what was once an ephemeral streambed. In this section there is a straight forward 10' vert, 50 yards downstream of the put-in. The next move is a tricky ledge. Beware! This drop has broken boats and it once drew a swim from a talented boater, resulting in a shallow and fast 1/4-mile ass-kicking. There is one more good drop before you meet up with the *real* Bluegrass Creek. The mood mellows considerably for the next few (10) miles and there are several barbwire fences (over 10).

Eventually the river starts to drop again. The rapids build in intensity as you enter a cool granite mini-gorge (IV-). Everything is easy read-and-run until things open up a bit and you sense that a big left hand turn is approaching, as well as some significant gradient. Eddy out on the left to scout. Here the river drops through a series of very low angle slides into increasingly large hydraulics, culminating with a powerful fifteen-footer. The drop looks intimidating and its hard to set safety in the carved gorge walls that surround the pool. Keep your speed through the last sticky hydraulic to successfully negotiate the falls. Prepare for some down time, unless you get a really good stroke, and even then...

Leif Embertson Paul Ronto the first drop

There is a 10' slide with a sticky hole at the exit of the mini-gorge. From here the gradient mellows and the barbwire returns. I counted 17 fences along this run, but if you are skilled in the art of fence limbo you will probably not need to portage. Be careful ducking and lifting the fences because some are anchored in the middle of the river and others have dangling lengths, waiting to tear your dry top. Fight through this section and take out at the Hwy 34 Bridge.

Don't run this section if you are planning on portaging the bigger drops. There are only a few medium sized rapids and endless miles of class II with barbwire fences.

Directions

The Flying X Ranch no longer allows access to paddlers and you have no choice but to put in at the outflow from the tunnel. To reach the take-out find the bridge over Bluegrass Creek on Hwy 34 in southeastern Wyoming (16 miles west of I-25). To get to the put-in drive a few hundred yards back east on Hwy 34 to a sign that points you in the direction of Wheatland Reservoir #3. Take a left at this paved road and continue for a ways until you cross a small bridge over a dry streambed. Immediately turn left onto a dirt road and continue to veer left 2-3 times as the road gets increasingly bumpy. Eventually (not too far) you will come to the tunnel and you can see the horizon line for the first small waterfall. There are no road signs out here so it helps to have a map handy if you're prone to getting lost.

BLUEGRASS CREEK RUNS IN LATE SUMMER, THANKS TO THE FARMERS WHO OWN WHEATLAND RESERVOIR #2 ABOVE THE RUNNABLE SECTION. TWO SECTIONS HAVE FALLS, AND THE REST OF THE RUN CONTAINS FENCES.

ES BRAD TEETS THE CRUX OF THE SECOND GORGE

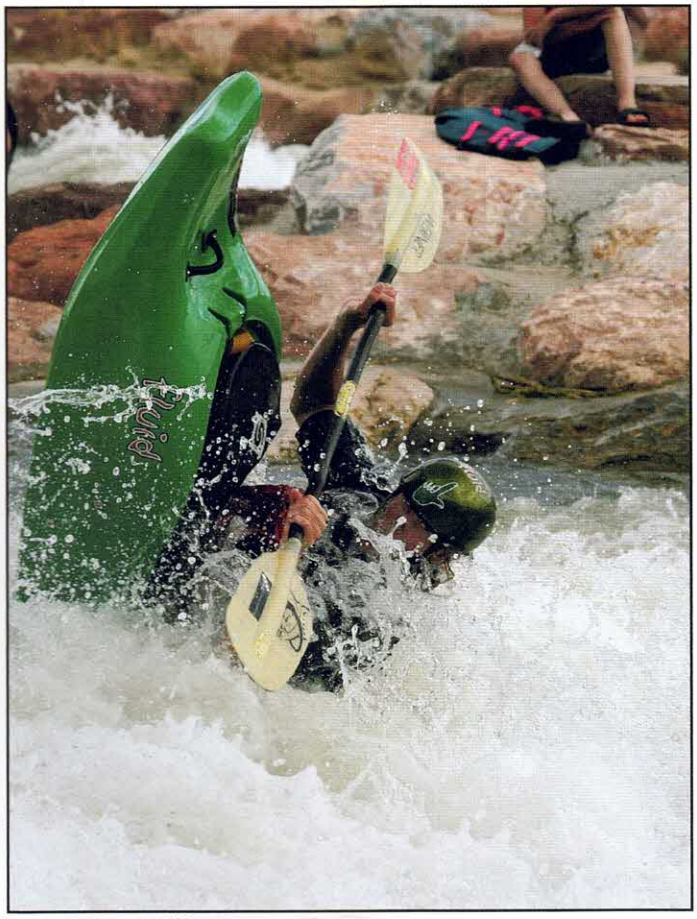
Casper Whitewater Park

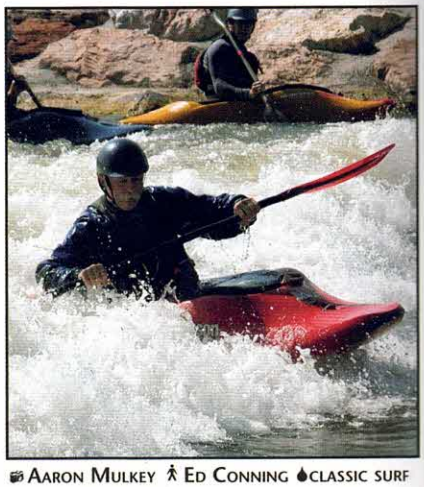
What? A whitewater park where? Yes, Casper joins Green River as the most unlikely of towns to have an amazingly consistent and quality whitewater park. With summertime flows on the North Platte through town of 3,000 cfs, from June all the way into September, and wintertime flows that rarely dip below 500 cfs, Casper offers year-round freestyle through four distinct features.

There are a total of five features, and each feature is *in* at various water levels. Drops One and Four are the defining features of the run. At 1500 the first is a wave and the fourth is a very sick hole. Aerial hole moves can be stomped and smiles big. Once flows get over 3,000 cfs two of the man-made ledges create excellent wave holes that provide bored Casper teenagers with hours of entertainment, in kayaks or not.

Directions: From Hwy 220 (CY Ave), go north on Poplar St and cross the river to Hwy 20/26. Travel west down river left to the Amoco Park or the Casper Whitewater Park parking lot. Gear up and get yourself wet any time of year.

CFS	500<optimal 3000<common
Class	III
Eddy	great
Quality	★★★★
Season	year round (no ice)
Gauge	North Platte Riv @ Casper, NWS gauge at www.crh.noaa.gov
Riv Access	Hwy 20/26





Brook Aitken ♦Wyoming sunset

Reed Koeneke Leif Anderson ♦looking for the back loop

Aaron Mulkey Ed Conning ♦classic surf

I have a secret...

By Eleanor Perry

We are all searching for an epic adventure of some kind; an escape from a mundane lifestyle. This escape may be a personal experience or lived vicariously through others. I know that in a guidebook like this I personally scan through all the entries and just read the "good, exciting, adventure stories". However, this is not one of those stories.

I do not have a pinnacle, epic moment in my kayaking career; one that has single-handedly defined me or my actions. Rather it has been an accumulation of experiences, both good and bad, that have lead to where I am today. Instead of highlighting my feats and war stories from the river I have a secret to share.

My secret is that I sometimes have a hidden desire for a natural disaster or bizarre accident to occur so I do not have to make the choice to run a section of river. This is a feeling that I have become familiar with over time as a paddler. I may look at a section of river, be excited to run it, have the ability to visualize my line and feel confident, yet sometimes, in the back of my head I have a nagging notion of not wanting to make the decision to enter a rapid or canyon.

This question is not a reflection of skill or desire; it is an expression of instinct. Especially as a woman, self preservation is a proven trait. This desire to avoid making a decision does not suggest that you are looking for a way out, nor is it a lack of confidence. It is simply one way that assumption of risk manifests itself. Knowing how to scout for yourself and being confident in your choice, whether to walk or paddle is a fundamental part of kayaking. Without this ability kayaking loses some of its fun.

There are numerous times when I have been on the fence about running a section and have decided to walk, or felt good about what I was doing and decided to run. In the past eight years of boating I have never made a choice I have regretted. This does not mean that I have always had the perfect line, that is far from true, but I always feel confident entering something or walk away without misgivings. Afterwards I may critique myself and look for ways I could have improved, but I never regret the decision.

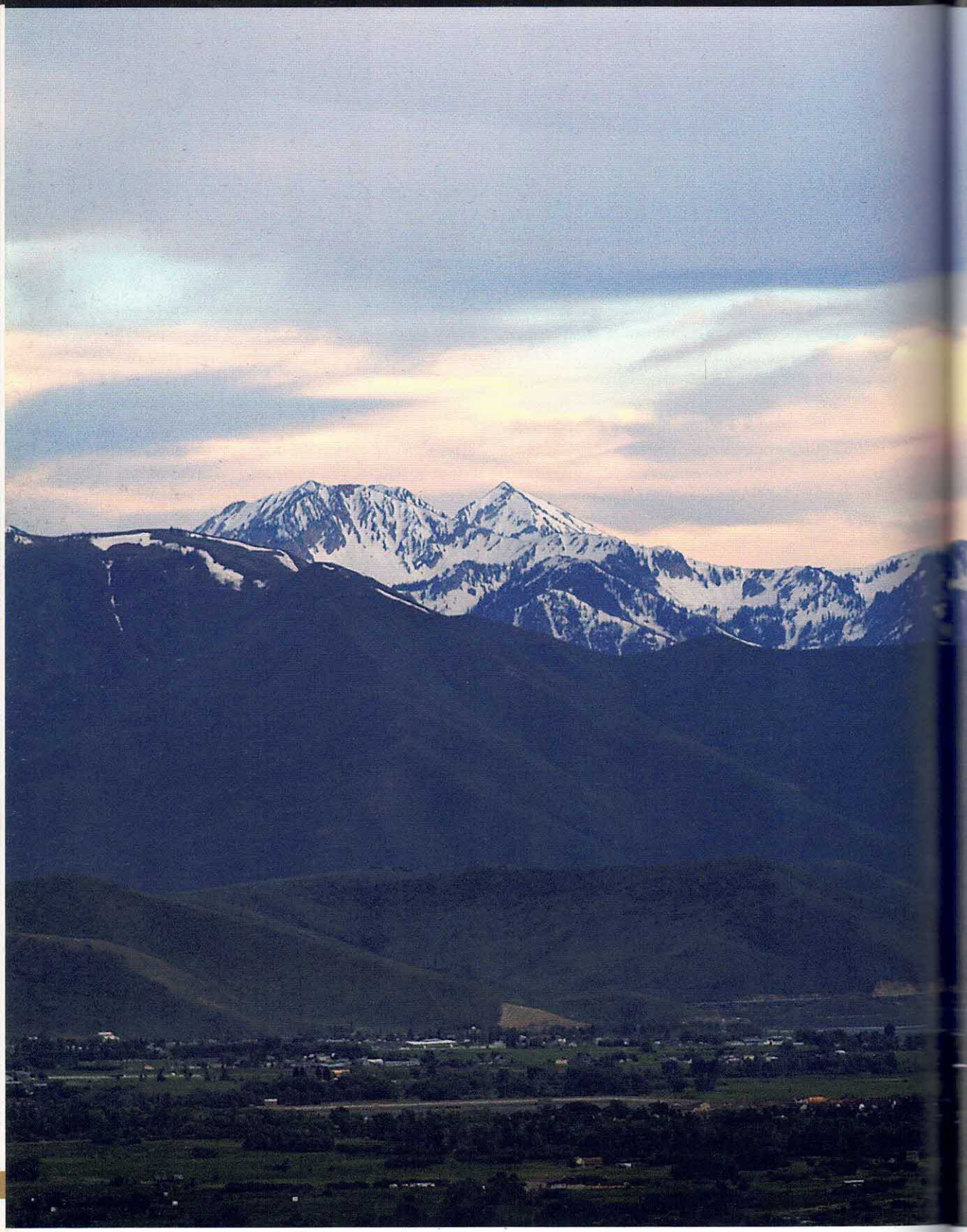
There are a few simple rules I keep in mind when paddling. When in doubt scout. If you are not sure what is coming up and are not comfortable with it, try and figure it out for yourself. If you take the opportunity to scout, pick your own line. It will boost your confidence as well as your boating abilities. That being said it is not always feasible or necessary to scout. In this case it is necessary that you feel comfortable and trust the people you are with. Know their paddling style, how they give lines and if you don't understand, ask. It is a great feeling running something for the first time with a group of paddlers who know the run and are able to give you lines. It is an incredible feeling paddling something blind, as long as you know what you are getting into. Never follow someone you do not know, down something that you cannot read-and-run for yourself.

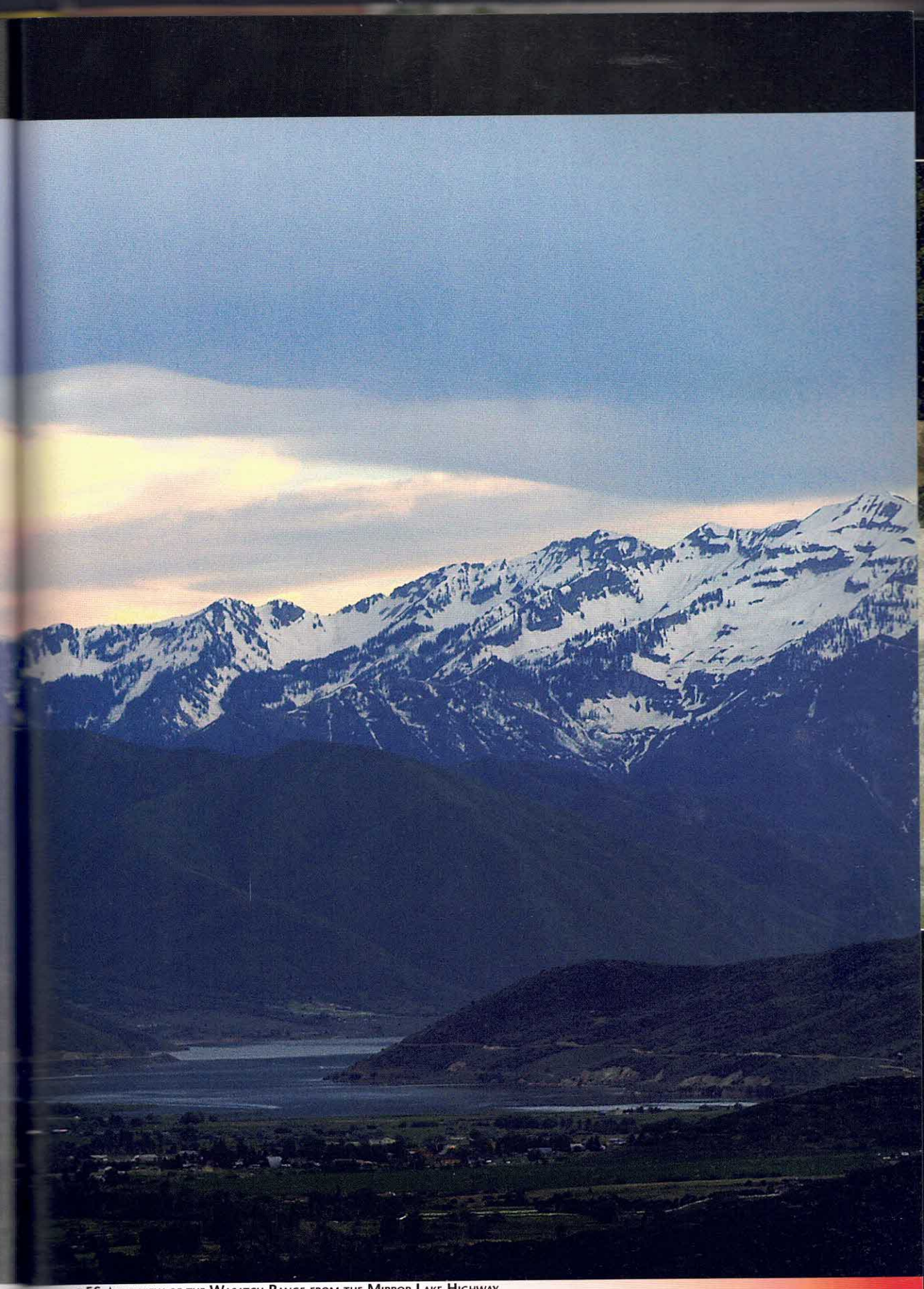
Despite my wishes, a freak wind carrying off my kayak is not a reality, and ultimately I have to make the decision. The choice whether to run a stretch of river or not is something that everyone has to face every time they paddle. It is always okay to walk and come back another day, but it is also okay to run. As a woman I often don't feel encouraged to push my limits at all. I find that I am expected to stay well within my comfort zone and to never test my paddling abilities.

I encourage everyone to explore the boundaries of their paddling. This may be trying a new trick on a wave or running a rapid that you have always wanted to. However, it is very important to understand that I am not encouraging anyone to go out paddling and give 'er just to say they have. Before trying something new you must be confident in yourself, confident in the outcome and aware of all the circumstances. It has to be your choice and come from within because the freak tsunami is never going to happen.

Good luck and enjoy the water!

Adam Welch/adamwelch.net Tracy Brabant





ES ♦THE VIEW OF THE WASATCH RANGE FROM THE MIRROR LAKE HIGHWAY

Blackfoot River

The Blackfoot is a great run that typically sees releases in August after everything else is dry. It is popular with both Salt Lake and Jackson paddlers. The whitewater is high quality class IV and V in a cool gorge. The whitewater is so good that boaters keep coming back even though there is a lot of flatwater and a long poison-ivy infested portage.

From the put-in you will encounter five miles of flatwater interrupted by a couple of class III slides. It is possible to cut about ½ mile off of this by using some unnamed 4WD roads.

When the whitewater finally gets going, it starts with a bang and is high quality for the next three miles. After a brief class IV warm-up you will encounter Teller Tube, the toughest drop on the run. Scout Teller Tube and all the other big drops on river right. After Teller Tube there is some quality class IV and a great class V- ending with a cool little waterfall. The next major drop after the waterfall is a fun triple drop that flows directly into the portage. Make sure you identify your take-out eddy from the triple drop. The portage is a long sweaty affair straight through poison ivy and rattlesnake dens. Wear pants and bring some soap. There is usually a trail, but you can't avoid the ivy entirely.

After the portage put back in for one more long class IV and several more miles of flatwater. It is possible (and recommended) to skip this flatwater by hiking up the drainage that is about 1.5 miles below the portage (see directions).

Gauge: There is no USGS gauge for this run. The best way to find out if it is running is to just call Blackfoot Reservoir at 208-238-0586. The run is best above 600 cfs, but can be run as low as 350.

Directions: From Blackfoot, ID head east on E 600 N (also known as Wolverine Rd). Eventually turn right on Blackfoot Rd, which becomes Blackfoot River Rd. About three miles past this turn there will be a rough dirt road heading down to the river. This is the most obvious take-out. For the put-in keep following Blackfoot River Rd to the intersection with Trail Creek Road. Follow Trail Creek Rd down to river level and put in.

For the hike-out take-out park about a ½ mile below the intersection of Blackfoot and Cedar Creek roads. There is a trail following the stream down to river level. Be respectful of private property and hike down to the river to verify that you know where to get out. The hike is close to a ½ mile uphill, but I think it is better than the flatwater.

CFS	350<min<600<best
Class	IV (Vs)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	160 fpm avg action
Length	6 miles
Season	July, August
Gauge	Blackfoot blw Res
Put-in	Blackfoot Rd
Take-out	Idaho prairie

Black Canyon of the Bear River

The Black Canyon of the Bear is truly one of the best runs in Eastern Idaho. It has continuous class IV whitewater in a beautiful gorge, easy access, a fun waterfall and an unforgettable class V rapid. Unfortunately this run rarely sees decent flows due to a diversion at the put-in. When recreational releases start on this run in 2008, thanks to American Whitewater, make sure and mark your calendar for a road trip weekend.

After a couple of miles of flatwater a couple of class III rapids lead into Bear Falls—a great triple drop ending with a clean 10'er. Below Bear Falls there is several miles of great class IV-IV+.

When you see a couple of houses appearing on the river right canyon rim be prepared to get out and scout. Boo-boo is a stout class V drop that can be tougher than it looks. The hole at the entrance has been the site of much carnage at higher flows, so treat it with respect.

After Boo-boo enjoy a couple more miles of class IV. A walking bridge signals the take-out on river left.

Gauge: Locals bump down this run at 500 cfs, but the run starts getting really good at any flow over 650 cfs. Flows aren't on the USGS site. You can check flows by calling 800-547-1501 or by checking out the Bear River Flow Data Page at www.pacificorp.com/hydro_hiws/BelowGraceDamFlow.html

Directions: The put-in is just north of Grace, ID where Hwy 34 crosses the river. To reach the take-out return to the town of Grace and head west on Center Street. Center Street becomes Turner Road. Turn left on River Rd. Follow River Rd through several miles of potato fields, eventually turning right on Grace Power Plant Rd. There is a nice parking area and take-out just upstream of the power plant.

-Tyson Titensor (both)

CFS	450<min<650<best
Class	IV (V)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	100 fpm
Length	6 miles
Season	spring or scheduled releases
Gauge	Bear blw Grace Dam
Put-in	Hwy 34
Take-out	Grace Power Plant

"[The vertical mile] forces you to look at barriers differently, and not to accept what other people define as limits. It's the birth of freedom."

-Doug Ammons

TINA SWAN

Logan River

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	300	350	550	900
Character	park-in-play only	top is good	min for Staircase	UT speeding ticket
Rick's Class	III+	IV-	IV-	IV
3rd-2nd Class	not running	II+	III-	III
Staircase Class	not running	not running	IV+	V-
Lower Class	II+ (III+)	II+ (III+)	III- (III+)	III- (IV-)
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	150 fpm crux, 60 fpm average			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good			
Length	9.5 miles			
Season	May, June			
Gauge	Logan River above State Dam, near Logan UT			
Put-in	Rick's Springs			
Take-out	V-wave at 100 North and Riverside Drive			

Located in the northernmost part of the state, the Logan offers a quality nine miles of roadside paddling. The four sections offer a bit of everything.

Rick's Springs

Beautiful and continuous, the best boating is found in the 5 miles upstream from the Wood Camp campground. There is always wood, and it is constantly shifting. There are also a couple of low bridges that need to be portaged at high flows. The crux occurs upstream of the bridge, between mm 472-473. Take out at the Wood Camp CG, or the Third Dam after a bunch of class III.

Third Dam to Second Dam

A short float that is great for beginning paddlers. No significant rapids, but overhanging brush and a curving riverbed require some attention. The run ends at Second Dam where there is a great left cartwheel hole at the outlet of the Powerhouse—a popular park-and-play spot. Optimal flow for the hole is 300-500 cfs.

Staircase Section

This is the best stretch of the Logan for advanced paddlers. It's a ten minute drive from downtown, and can be run in thirty minutes flat. Unfortunately, it requires more water than the other runs on the Logan because a diversion steals a couple hundred cfs. Look for a minimum of 550 to make the Staircase worthwhile. This run has few eddies, and a misplaced tree in here would be bad news. Consider pre-scouting the entire run, which is done via the path on river left.

At high flows the spillway of the Second Dam is really fun. From Second Dam to Red Bridge there is a short class III warm-up. Immediately below Red Bridge is a diversion dam with a big hole. The hole can be punched, but if you aren't confident about getting through the meat, then opt for the easy walk on the river left path.

The crux of the run is just downstream of the Nature Center. This stretch approaches class V at higher water, and offers some of the better paddling in the state. The crux is short, but high quality and easy to lap. The last steep drop is negotiated after crossing under the road, and then it is swift class III to the take out at the First Dam.

Lower Logan

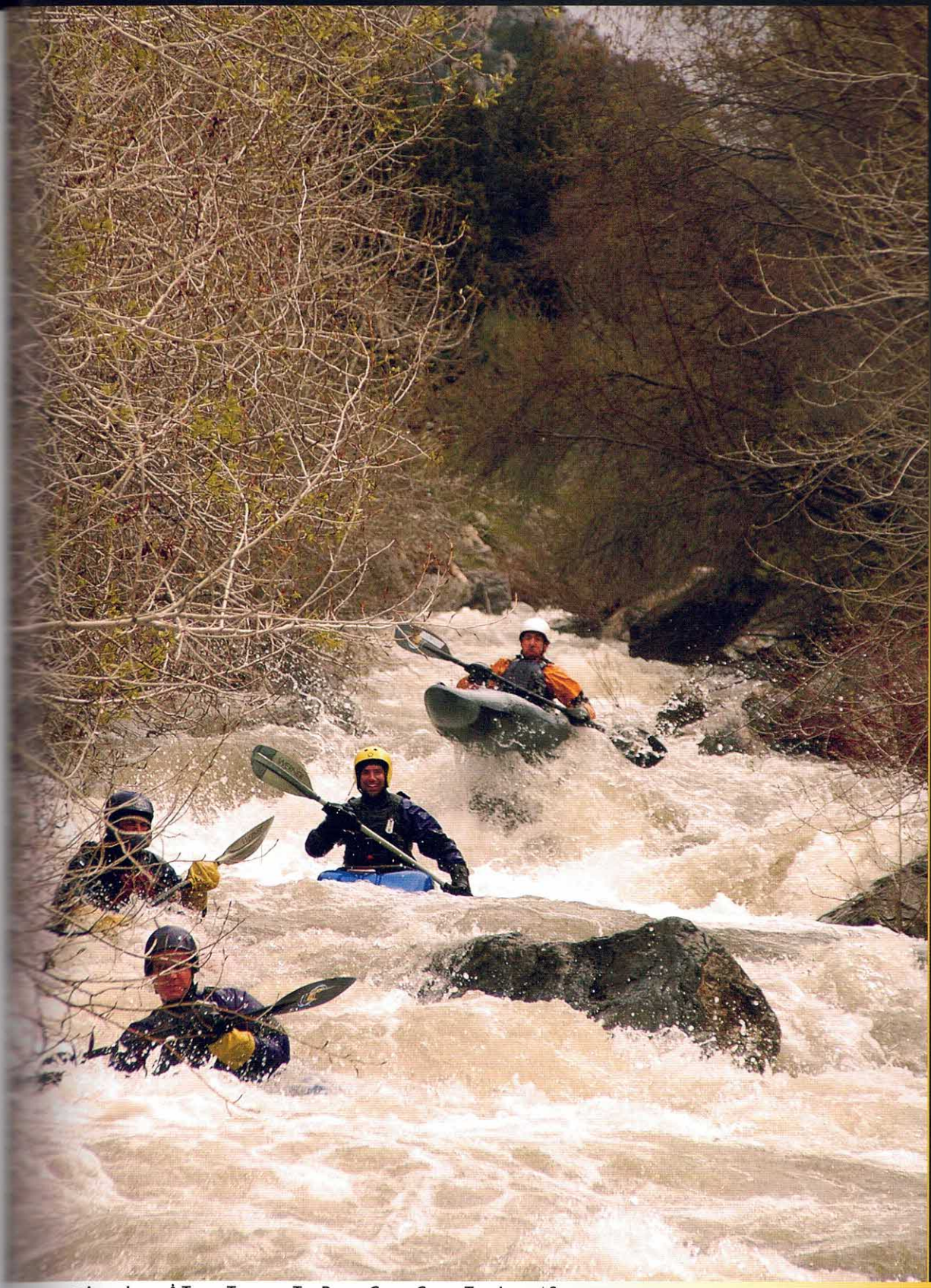
Putting in at the First Dam rewards paddlers with a great beginner run that conveniently runs through town. Towards the end of the run there is a diversion dam that can be rather shallow at low flows, and a big hole at higher levels. It's easy to take out in the park above the diversion (river right). Below the diversion is a wave-hole called V-Wave—arguably the best park-and-play on the Logan. The wave can be shallow and trashy, but it gives up a variety of tricks even at low flows after everything else has dried up. Take out at this wave or continue on down to the Logan River Golf Course for more class II.

-Tyson Titensor

Directions

The V-Wave, and popular take-out/park-in-play can be found under the bridge at 100 North and Riverside Drive. To reach the put-in for the Lower Logan, and the rest of the sections, take Hwy 89 east, where the following points serve as river-marks—First Dam at mm 464, Second Dam at mm 465, Third Dam at mm 472, and Rick's Springs at mm 477.

Four sections in a mere nine miles of roadside paddling offer everything from class II beginner currents, low water park-and-play, and some of the better creeking in the state at high flow.



Allen Jones 🚶 Tyson Titensor, Tim Payne, Curtis Crabb, Tom Jones 💧 Staircase action

Ogden River

The best section of the Ogden only takes about 20 minutes to run, and rarely has water—but when it has water it is a real treat. The goods start at the green bridge, shortly downstream from the Alaskan Inn. From the green bridge to the Dinosaur Park, it is non-stop action with some big holes, sketchy wood, and sharp rocks. The run is really just one big rapid, so it is hard to break it down. The first three rapids have big holes and a couple of must-make moves to trip up a paddler. The run gets a little more technical in the section where the river crosses under the bridge, and then starts to mellow out as it approaches Rainbow Gardens.

For the full experience it's best to show up after work with darkness approaching, and see who can get the most laps before dark. You may be tempted by the hot springs above the last rapid, but resist this temptation and do another lap. The hot spring is shallow, not hot, and frequented by people who are best avoided.

There is swift class II above the Alaskan Inn, and decent class III below the Rainbow Gardens, but I haven't boated either.

Directions: From Ogden, take 12th Street east, which turns into Hwy 39 as it heads into the canyon. The take-out for the most action is just upstream of Rainbow Gardens. Continue upstream for about two miles, and put in at the Alaskan Inn.

CFS	200<min 400<optimal<1200
Class	IV <400< IV+ <800< V-
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	150 fpm
Length	2 miles
Season	May
Gauge	Ogden blw Pineview Res nr Huntsville
Put-in	blw Alaska Inn
Take-out	Rainbow Gardens

Ogden Park (no beta box)

The Ogden Park consists of a series of ledges, a couple of which can produce decent holes. Optimal flows are from 600 to 2000 cfs and this class III- park can be a great place to take a beginner at low flows. At higher flows the first hole gets very retentive and becomes an easy place to practice your loop. In big snow years the park generally has water before most of the other runs in the Wasatch, so it can be a good place to warm up for the season.

Gauge: Weber River at Gateway, UT

Directions: Take the 24th Street Exit from I-15 in Ogden and head east towards downtown. Take a left before the large bridge, on what is B Street, and continue to the T-intersection. Turn right and the park will be on your left in a 1/2-mile.

Riverdale Wave

The Riverdale wave requires a lot of water to be playable, but when the flows are right it is truly a world class feature. Designed by Nick Turner, this wave is close to the interstate, has eddy access from both sides of the river, and convenient parking. The wave itself is a tall and sometimes violently breaking beast. There are laterals on both sides for air blunts, and the pile in the middle can produce big loops and cartwheels. In short, this is probably the best park-and-play feature in Utah. Come with the intention to throw down and the expectation to get beatdown.

Karen Estee Zach Beck Riverdale Wave, 2200 cfs

Directions: From Riverdale, take the Riverdale Exit east from I-15, and turn left on 700 West. Turn right at the first four-way intersection, and follow the road around the bend to the parking area. This is the take-out for the whitewater park.

-Tyson Titensor (all)

CFS	1100<playable<3000 2000 is prime
Class	III+
Eddy	excellent
Quality	★★★★★
Season	May, June
Gauge	Weber River at Gateway, UT
Riv Access	700 West

OGDEN SITS AT THE CROSSROADS OF I-15 AND I-84, AND SERVES AS A POPULAR THOROUGHFARE FOR TRAVELING KAYAKERS. IN THE SPRING A HANDFUL OF PADDLING OPTIONS POP UP, INCLUDING A SICK PARK-AND-PLAY WAVE.

@MEGAN TITENSOR 🚶 TYSON TITENSOR & TIM PAYNE 💧OGDEN RIVER AT 900 CFS

Cottonwood Creeks

Famous for their almost 500 inches of annual snow, both Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons entice droves of skiers and riders to their slopes every winter. The inevitable snow melt feeds the glacier carved granite wonderland of Little Cottonwood, and the river sculpted Big Cottonwood. Although the whitewater does not rival the skiing, several stretches of river on both Big and Little Cottonwood Creek offer steep and short runs for the mank enthusiast.

Both Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons supply water to the Salt Lake valley, and therefore the legality of paddling these sections is in question. The issue has rarely been tested, but its advised to keep a low profile until outstanding boater PR improves the situation.

Big Cottonwood Creek

CFS	140<min
Class	V Storm Mtn IV Catch Pond
Quality	★★★
Gradient	200 fpm Storm Mtn 125 fpm Catch Pond
Length	.7 miles Storm Mtn 1.5 miles Catch Pond
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Hwy 191

Two runs provide the bulk of the action in Big Cottonwood Canyon, Storm Mountain, and the Catch Pond. Storm Mountain lies about half way up the BCC and is arguably the most difficult run in the Wasatch Range. At high flows this becomes a force of nature, but low flows make the run manageable. This steep stretch contains quality boofs over large granite boulders and bouncy run-outs. The most notable drop is Bear Cave, a ten' waterfall, named after a local boater named Bear who decided to *hibernate* while pinned in the falls. Pre-scout everything.

Two features form the crux of the Catch Pond section, Wahoo rapid and a sticky hole about half way through. Wahoo starts underneath the bridge near the Park and Ride with a few fun holes, and leads into a manmade slide. The sticky hole downstream can be difficult to spot and requires speed. The rest of the run is bouncy and fast, and should be scouted from river right. The Catch Pond run is a perfect way to blow off some steam after a long day at the office.

Directions: From Butlerville, the Storm Mountain run can be accessed by driving east on Hwy 190, upstream of the Park and Ride at the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon. The Catch Pond run starts at the Park and Ride, and continues downstream to a park and a catch pond.

Little Cottonwood Canyon

CFS	140<min
Class	V Hellgate IV C-wood Heights
Quality	★★★
Gradient	500 fpm crux Hellgate 245 fpm Heights
Length	12 miles (variable)
Season	peak
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Hwy 210 Hellgate Wastach Blvd La Caille

Two distinct runs are contained in the Little Cottonwood's descent into the Salt Lake Valley, Hellgate Gorge and the Cottonwood Heights town run.

Hellgate Gorge starts just beneath the unrunnable 25'er at the north end of the bypass road and continues toward Snowbird. This section has a 25' double drop, and many others. The 25' double drop has a sketchy second LZ. The crux of this run is at the take-out where the Little Cottonwood goes back under the by-pass road near Cliff Lodge. A tiny eddy is your must make take out, immediately above a dark tunnel that will accelerate you towards a very sharp jumble of boulders. Muey no Bueno.

The Cottonwood Heights town run begins in the parking lot just south of the blinking highway sign at the mouth of the canyon. Just upstream are several steeper granite drops that are often filled with wood. In between theses drops and the parking lot is a catch pond used for wood removal and diversion. To add a few extra drops scout upstream.

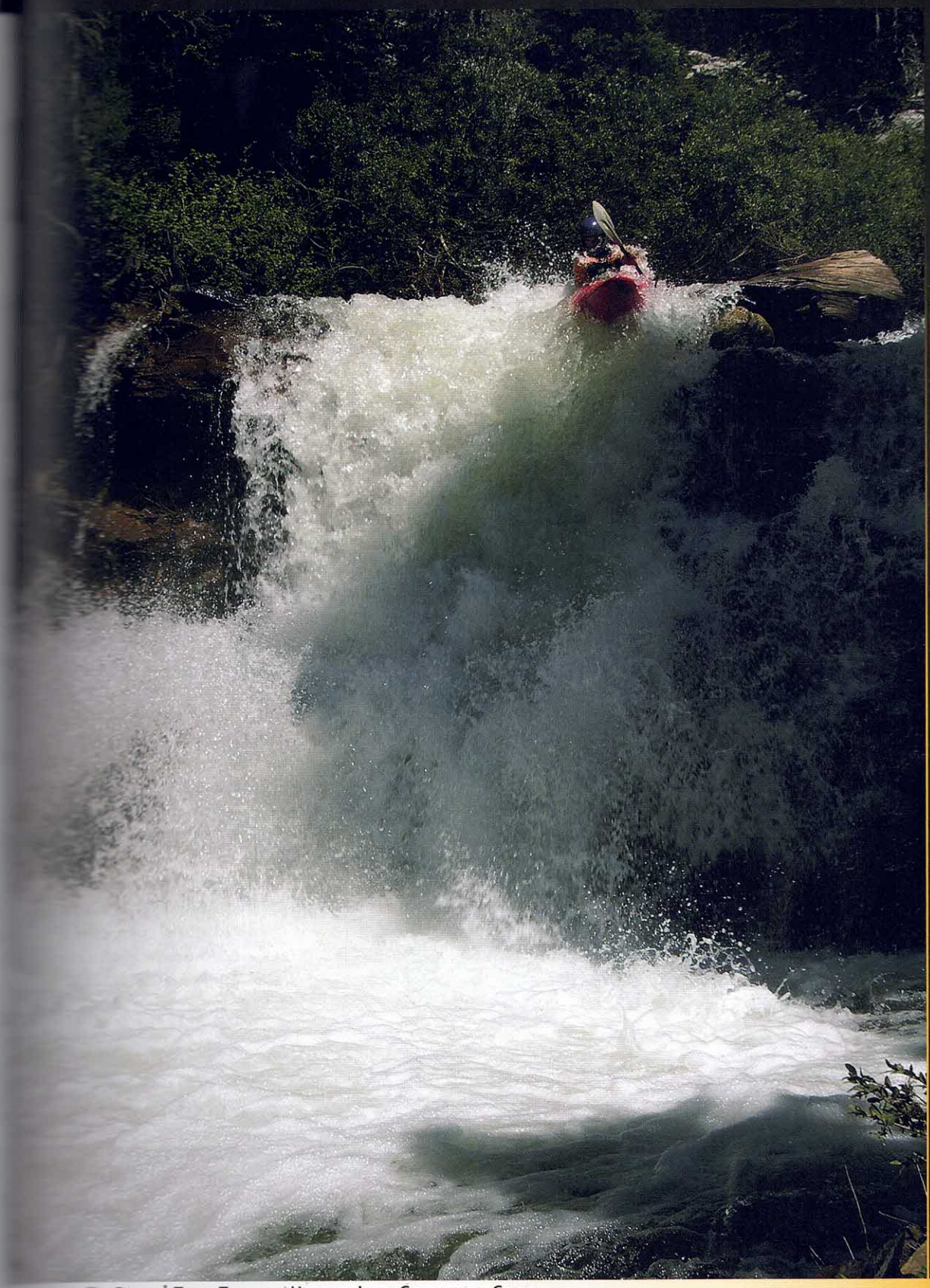
From the parking lot down you'll encounter many fun urbanized class III-IV drops. Developers, in places, have walled in this riverbed making eddy's none existent and wood difficult to avoid at higher flows. Three significant drops are found on this run, Stonebridge Falls, Swimming Hole, and Twin Holes. Stonebridge is located just under 9400 south. The rest are difficult to scout because of trespassing. Avoid the keeper hole just below the take out.

Directions: The hellgate run is located between Alta and Snowbird on Hwy 210 in Little Cottonwood Canyon.

To get to the put-in for the Cottonwood Heights town run, take Wasatch Blvd east to the Temple Quarry parking lot, at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon. Take out at the first road access below the put-in, on Wasatch Blvd where the creek crosses the road just across from the five-star La Caille restaurant, with beautiful grounds and even more beautiful waitresses.

-Sam Chesley (all)

Although the whitewater does not rival the skiing, several stretches of river on both Big and Little Cottonwood Creek offer steep and short runs for the mank enthusiast.



●Tim Payne 🚶Tyson Titensor ♦Hellgate, Little Cottonwood Creek

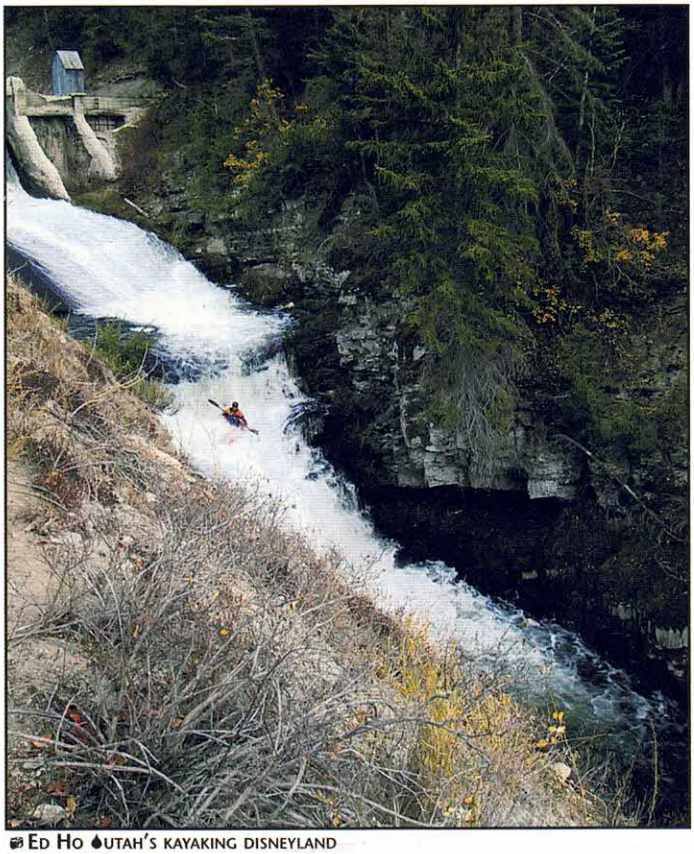
Sixth Water Creek

CFS	30<min<60<best
Class	V-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	pool drop
Length	1/4 mile
Season	May, June, July
Gauge	6th Water abv Syar
Riv Access	FR 29

Imagine it's the early 1900s. You and your water project engineer buddies are sitting down brainstorming methods to solve the growing water crisis on the Wasatch Front—a formidable task. One of your colleagues pipes up "I've got it! First we'll build a four mile tunnel through the Wasatch divide. Then we'll build a reservoir on top of the tunnel. Finally, we'll jam a bunch of water down a tiny stream bed and let it route its way to the Diamond fork river!!!" Sound ambitious? It was, yet roughly 15 years later water that traditionally flowed freely to the Green River was making its way through the Strawberry Tunnel, down Sixth Water Creek to the Wasatch Front. One hundred years later, kayakers dubbed the initial stretch below the Strawberry Tunnel "Unborn Soul," and attempt to navigate the by product of a 100 year old water project engineer's vision.

The Unborn Soul section of Sixth Water generates many different opinions. Some maintain it's a low skilled plop-and-drop, others confess it's the scariest thing they've ever run. Whatever your opinion, the Unborn Soul section of Sixth Water provides consistent boating throughout most the year in an area known as the second driest state in the nation. This fact, combined with its close proximity to Diamond Fork hot springs, quality fly fishing and Highway 6, make Unborn Soul a unique afternoon diversion for boaters.

Another interesting fact about the Unborn Soul section of Sixth Water is that it frequently gets run on flows of 30 cfs. This is obviously the low end of boatable, but is still considered manageable and fun by most. Low flows make quality boof strokes difficult and this can be compounded by low rocker creekboats. Often high rocker playboats make things more manageable at low flows. Higher flows found only in the spring (60-80 cfs) increase speed, trajectory and fun. The crux of the run consists of a 12' spillway, 10'er, 8'er, multi-tiered 25'er, 8'er, and a run-out of small ledge drops—all within a 1/2-mile. This makes Unborn Soul more like an amusement ride than a kayak run. Historically the Strawberry Tunnel could generate flows up to 500 cfs as evidenced in the dramatic scouring of the spillway.



Ed Ho ♦Utah's kayaking disneyland

Celestial Gorge: During this time two other kayak runs existed on Sixth Water including an excellent class V run called the Celestial Gorge, located five miles downstream. Yet recent completion of the multi-staged Syar Tunnel has replaced the Strawberry Tunnel in an effort to stop the erosion generated from the Strawberry Tunnel operations.

Directions: Hwy 6 is the best route, because it stays on pavement as much as possible. East of Spanish Fork on Hwy 6, turn north on Diamond Fork Canyon Rd, drive approx 15 miles, and turn right (east) onto Sheep Creek Rd (FR 29). Follow this road up a steep grade for approximately two miles. At the top of this grade turn left (north) on to FR 29. If you miss this turn you will proceed on FR 51 down a moderate grade and across a bridge. This is Sixth Water, the run is upstream, and you went too far.

Once on FR 29 it's a ¼-mile around a bend to a gate. Continue past for about four miles, where the grade will get steep. On one of the turns (looking downhill) you can see a small road and a gate. Three hundred yards of vehicle torture lead to the small parking area. From the parking area a small road leads to the tunnel exit and spillway.

-Sam Chesley

Our Ultimate Shutdown

But the Slot Canyons Were Still Cool

By Tina Swan

"What time is it?"
"4:00 AM, we're right on schedule."

It's February in Colorado. My boyfriend Kyle emerges from our office with a smile ear to ear. There is a sweet creek running in Utah per the AW website. He calls up his buddy Evan who is immediately in. They have set out to write the new guidebook for the Rockies and this is the first trip of the season! It is *only* a 10 hour drive to the put-in. Kyle prides himself on the 250K miles his 1994 Toyota has accumulated over the years.

We are on the road within the time it takes Evan to get to Denver. I sleep for most of the drive and dream of sweet slides and waterfalls. I feel us come to a halt 12 hours later in the middle of the night. We awake in the morning to the sound of a snowplow in six feet of snow. I soon learn we are just around the corner from the road to the put-in. The guys are blazingly optimistic! With smiles plastered across their faces we pull into an information office to ask for info on the creek. With questioning eyes, the ranger asks, "What are you kids out here to do?" Kyle mentions kayaking. "We don't usually see you kayakers out here for another few months," he says. Okay, okay, get to the point, how do we get to the creek, which Kyle insists is still running. The guy tells us the area is snowmobile access only. Where snowmobiles can go, both Evan and Kyle agree, the T100 can go!

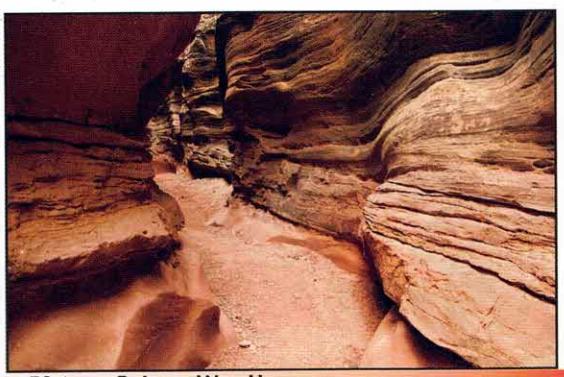
At this point, I am a bit shocked that both guys are still convinced we are going creeking. Who am I to question these two experts. We drive another hour and come to a lodge in the middle of snowfields. I stay in the car at this point as I'm a little embarrassed to be asking how to get to a creek amongst snowmobilers and ice fishermen out for some winter fun. Kyle and Evan venture inside for some beta. When they return, their faces told me reality had set in. Shut down. The only access was *truly* via snowmobile.

As we are driving back the way we came Evan becomes convinced there is road access from the other side! I convince them to stop in at the first ranger station so I can ask some questions before we start driving another six hours! I get the ranger to call the station on the other side to ask about access. The other ranger sounds as perplexed by kayakers as the first guy is. The other side is snowmobile access only as well. I too, am ultimately bummed, and I take my time getting back outside to break the news to the boys.

We didn't get to kayak on that trip. We drove A LOT! Our rig looked pretty sweet driving over Vail pass with six kayaks on the roof in a snow storm (we had the playboats just in case). We did stop and check out some amazing slot canyons on the way home. Through all of this, the part that still intrigues me are the joyous faces of Evan and Kyle and the optimism they possessed despite the obvious signs that kayaking was not going to happen. The road home was a quiet one with lost hopes of running a sweet creek in February.

This was the first trip of the 2006 season for the authors. They managed not to get entirely shut down the rest of the summer—driving long distances, kayaking day and night, and spending a lot of time on the computer to bring you this book. They are kayakers at heart and not much will slow their motivation to explore what's in the next state, around the next bend, and over the next horizon line. Until proven otherwise, they're going creekin'.

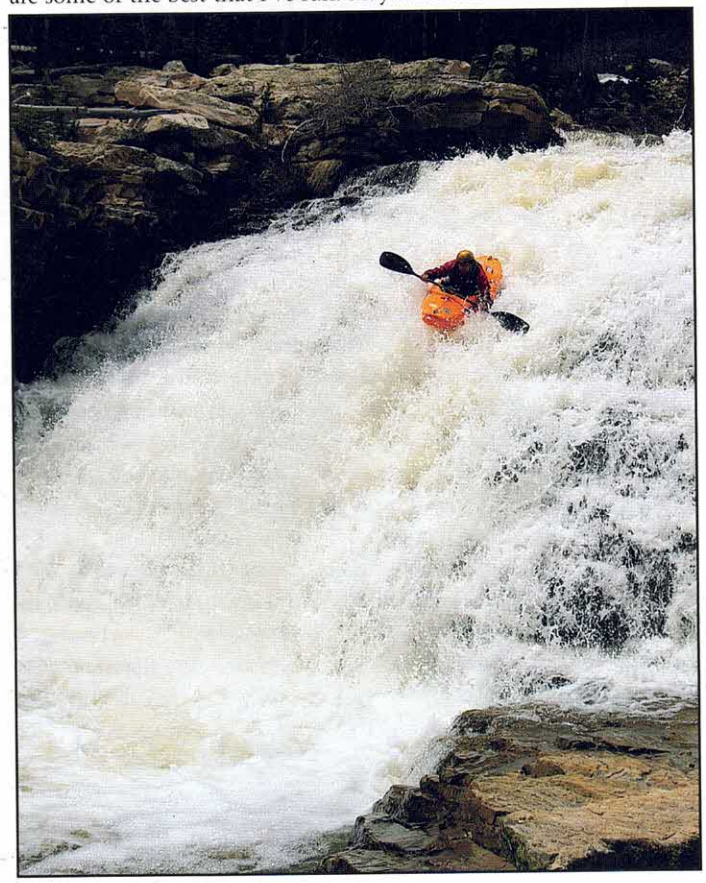
ES ♦ Our lovely campsite on night one



ES ♦ Plan B, Little Wild Horse

Upper Provo River

The Provo River flows off the west face of the Uinta Mountains, cutting through slate gorges, snow-covered hillsides, and surprisingly lush alpine scenery. Flowery literature could continue, or I can just tell you that the dozen class V drops on this 5.5-mile of river described are some of the best that I've run. Maybe it's the relation to Colorado slate that I love—broken, sharp, shallow, and steep. Or the fact that the crux of the Provo Falls park-and-huck is an impressive set of slides on par with the whitewater of the Central Mountains.



Patch the boat in the parking lot from your last misadventure, and hike up to the goods, which start just above a sick 10'er that you can stomp boofs on. If you ever needed a place to practice boofs, this single drop may be it (although I'm unsure of the depth). Slip into the small warm-up grade slides, and try to enjoy the scenery as the looming horizon line approaches. The next five drops will put a smile on your face—stitches for the unfortunate. But the adventure isn't over. Fast and blind corners lead into three substantial drops, the last of which will get the heart pumping for just about any kayaker. Fun bedrock flat-slides create banking laterals, charge through a cool mini-gorge, and mellow at Murdock Basin Road—but you pass this take-out as well, since you came for the triple crown. A scenic float gives way to chit-chat about how good this is, and then the juicy entrance to Runaway Dog throttles your attention back in time for one last gorge—and a rapid named the decapitator.

Drive to Kamas for milk shakes, BJ beer, and the conclusion of a worthy Utah experience.

Upper Provo Falls

For paddlers wandering Utah in search of big waterfalls, the Upper Provo Falls park-and-huck section is the star of Utah. Located in the high country of the Uintas east of Kamas lies the Upper Provo Falls viewing area, the staging point for the ensuing adrenaline fest. The rock here is surprisingly smooth and most of the drops are sliding, making it possible to run all of the drops despite consistently shallow landings.

The top of this section is reached via a short hike on river left. The put-in is at a small drop with a log over the lip. Approximately seven small drops, including an eight' vert, gives paddlers a warm-up to the larger bottom five falls. It can be nice to eddy on river right above the most noticeable horizon line (the first slide of about 15') and check out the first three drops from that vantage.

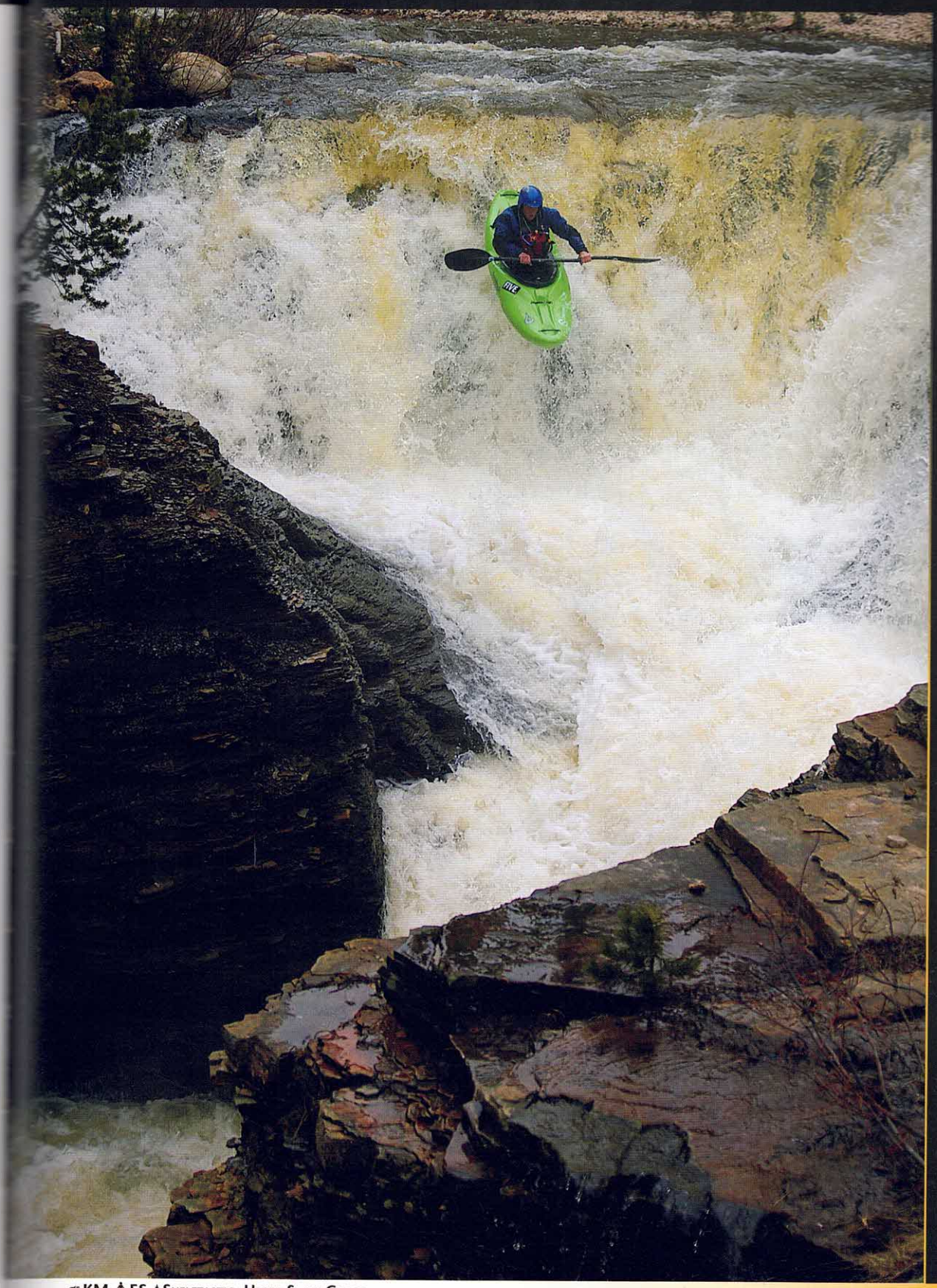
Successful runs above will boost confidence levels just in time for Bad Chihuahua, a 15' vert-to-slide drop that dishes out a small hit on the landing, and offers a small river left eddy above the final drop. The series ends with the only V+ falls, Big Boy. Ultra shallow landings on both sides of center require a precise landing to avoid injury, but high water will leave room for error.

ES KM Big Boy, Upper Provo Falls

CFS	600<min 1300<optimal<2600
Class	V- (NR)<1300<V (V+)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	345 fpm
Length	3/4 mile
Season	May, June
Gauge	Provo Riv nr Woodland (barometer)
Riv Access	Upper Provo Falls Viewing Area

Directions: From Kamas, drive east on Hwy 150 (Mirror Lake Highway) to the Upper Provo River Falls viewing area. A $3 day use pass is required in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

A DOZEN SUBSTANTIAL DROPS SPICE UP THE SWEET BEDROCK WHITEWATER, SERVING UP A DELICIOUS SLICE OF GOODNESS WITH A PINCH OF ADRENALINE SPRINKLED ON TOP, THEN BAKED TO PERFECTION. YUM.



KM ES SHELFTASTIC, UPPER SLATE GORGE

Upper Provo River

Upper Provo Slate Gorge

Plenty of read-and-run IV+ whitewater and three defined drops spice up the bedrock whitewater. It's easily combined with the park-and-huck, but will require a few small portages due to wood before the action really cleans up.

Local paddlers have been hard at work keeping this section free of wood. The timber that remains didn't hinder our downstream progress too much, since often times the portages could be combined with a scout.

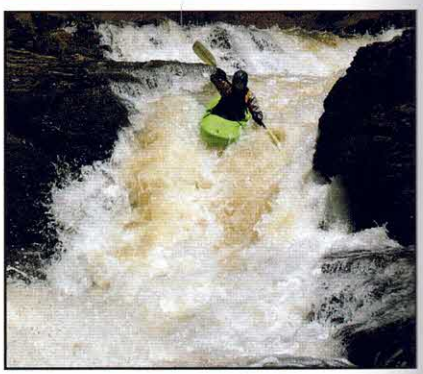
About a ½-mile below the bridge a bedrock slide will bend around a blind right corner, necessitating a scout of the Grilled Stuft Kayaker. This is a short four' vert that angles to the left where a massive log awaits. If you choose to portage, consider a river level seal launch. The next ¾ miles of river contain all of the class V rapids.

Swirls is the easiest of the Vs, and more importantly marks the approaching final double drop, Shelftastic. The first 10' tier lands on rocks, and even a flat landing will find the river bottom at the lip of the 8' finale.

A bedrock riverbed from here to the take-out at the Murdock bridge contains a short gorge of fun class IV. When free of wood, the bottom of this section is a good piece of whitewater for adventurous class IV boaters.

Directions: From Kamas, drive east on Hwy 150 (Mirror Lake Highway), and turn right onto Murdock Basin Road. Use the bridge to take out. Continue east on Hwy 150 approximately two miles to the bridge over the Upper Provo and put-in. Pull over at the Slate Gorge Overlook to catch a glimpse of Shelftastic below, and Swirls just upstream.

CFS	600<min 1300<optimal<2600
Class	IV (V, V-, V+)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	180 fpm
Length	2 miles
Season	April to June
Gauge	Provo Riv nr Woodland (barometer)
Put-in	Upper Provo Falls
Take-out	Murdock Basin Road



Lower Slate Gorge

The exhilarating mile of the Lower Slate Gorge shouldn't be missed. It is a nonstop rush of slides, mini-gorges and boofs with few big drops, and a roadside nature that rarely allows it to disappoint if wood or high flows keep you away from the other stretches. The continuous adrenaline this run supplies will last a lot longer than the abrupt drops found upstream anyway. This short run has been kept wood free by industrious locals for the last few seasons, but a mandatory pre-scout is necessary for every descent. The wood collects often, and the eddies are few and small.

The Lower Slate Gorge can be combined with the Upper Slate Gorge if you don't mind portaging a log or two or paddling the two-miles of flat. You won't miss a single rapid if you drive between the Upper Gorge take-out at Murdock Meadows Road and the Lower Gorge's first rapids. The action starts with a long four-tiered series of low angle slides that speeds into the Runaway Dog—a long slide that culminates into a big ledge hole. The Dog's main hole is sticky at high flows.

Soon the river turns right and enters a mini gorge where the pace picks up. Some confined slides lure paddlers to the center of the river, and your stomach will drop out when you paddle over the lip of Wild Mouse, an 8'er that, even though you scouted it, will surprise you. It's important to stay left, because soon you'll notice the Decapitator, a ledge of slate extending out into the river at about shoulder height.

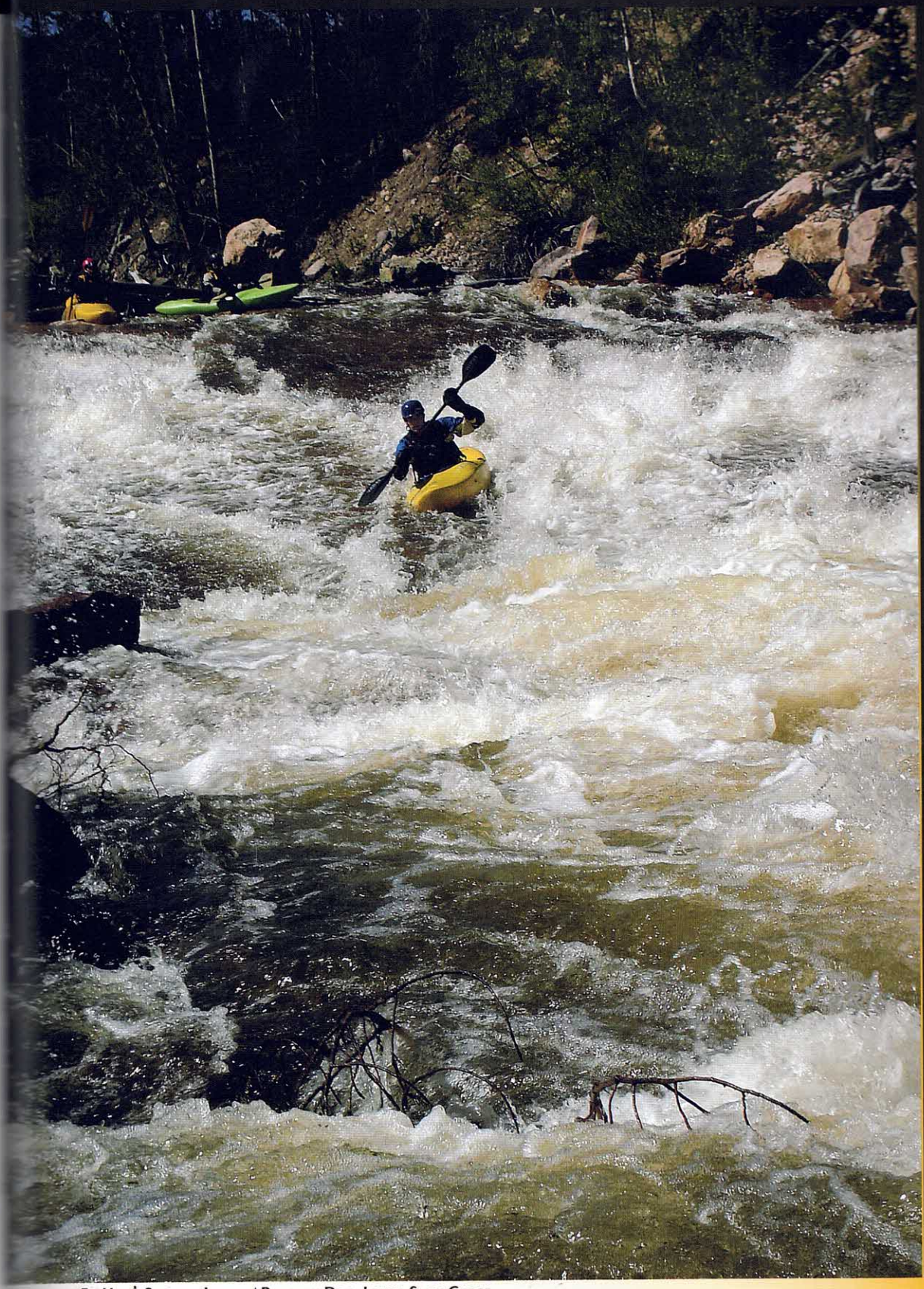
The bedrock slides give way to a few traditional rapids in the last mini-gorge, a straightforward although sinuous series of turns with 20-30' walls. Take out when you exit the gorge and see a magnificent cascade coming down the river left mountainside. It's a short walk back to the road, and a short hike to run it again.

CFS	600<min 1300<optimal<2400
Class	IV+
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	190 fpm
Length	1 mile
Season	April to June
Gauge	Provo Riv nr Woodland (barometer)
Put-in	Top of Runaway Dog
Take-out	above Soapstone CG

Directions: From Kamas, drive east on Hwy 150 (Mirror Lake Highway), and take out one mile above Soapstone CG. Put-in two miles above Soapstone CG, at the top of the roadside slide, Runaway Dog. A $3 day use pass is required.

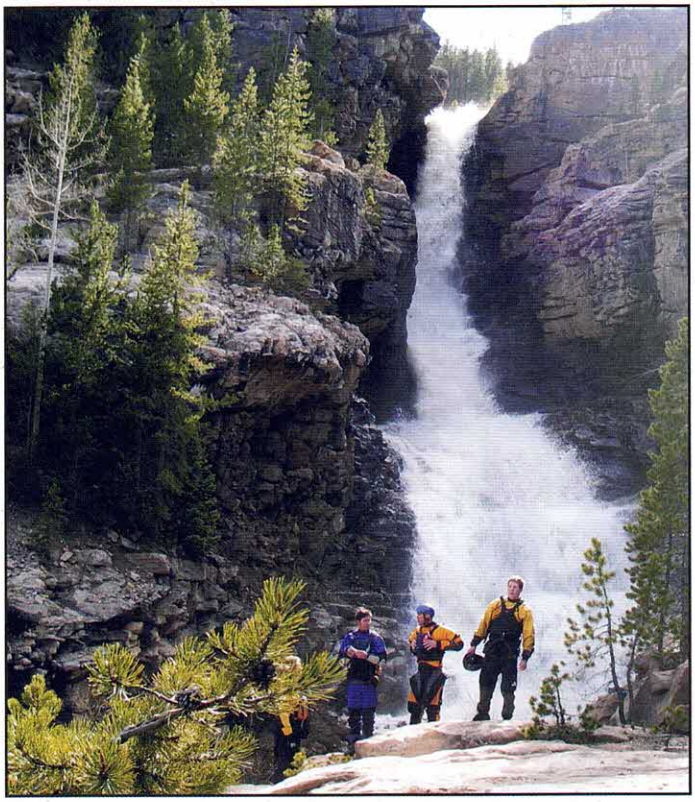
-Tim Payne

Ed Ho ♦ Swirls



Ed Ho Sheldon Litwin Runaway Dog, Lower Slate Gorge

NF Duchesne & Forks



The Provo Falls and Upper and Lower Slate Gorges of the Provo river represent some of the best paddling yet to be found in the Uinta wilderness. A day spent on any of these three classic runs leaves boaters looking for more. Yet a quick glance the Utah gazetteer signifies a major problem with kayak exploration of the Uintas—limited or absent access. It is thought that many of the upper reaches of the Uinta range contain secret treasures that only gradient hungry kayakers would appreciate, but its few who are willing to hump their boat an average 15 miles past the lowlands and beaver dams in a hope of finding the secret stash carved out of Uinta slate.

The North Fork Duchesne drainage lies just east of the Upper Provo and represents an outlet for the class 4-5 exploration kayaker seeking the remoteness of the Uinta range. As with all runs in the Uintas, wood is a significant issue. Multi-day trips and a willingness to hike will be the requirements for exploration in the Uinta Mountains.

North Fork Duchesne Source

The stretch from Mirror Lake to the confluence with the EF Duchesne is a bona fide wood fest sprinkled with a few fun defined drops and mini gorges. Consider this more of a method of access to the EFNF Duchesne as well as the lower Cataract run. It starts as a small trickle, and paddlers may have to walk downstream a bit to find suitable flow. Eventually the pace picks-up, spilling over fun drops and mini-gorges. Many log portages will be encountered and at times it is easier to carry for short distances—the major downfall is wood.

The confluence with the EFNF Duchesne will be welcomed for the additional flow. The four-mile stretch from the confluence to the Duchesne Tunnel contains heads up class III+ boating with great scenery. On our run we found logs on some of the blind corners and found it easier to walk for small stretches when the river filtered into the typical wood fest, but its not bad.

Directions: From Kamas take Hwy 150 east, past the Upper Provo Falls, and over the pass to Mirror Lake. Put-in here, or hike downstream a ways.

CFS	75<min<200<best
Class	IV
Quality	★★
Gradient	250 fpm avg
Length	6.2 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Mirror Lake parking lot
Take-out	Iron Mine CG

To get to the take-out, take Hwy 35 southeast from Kamas, then turn left on FR 144, before the Stockmore Ranger Station. Take FR 144 north to Iron Mine CG take-out.

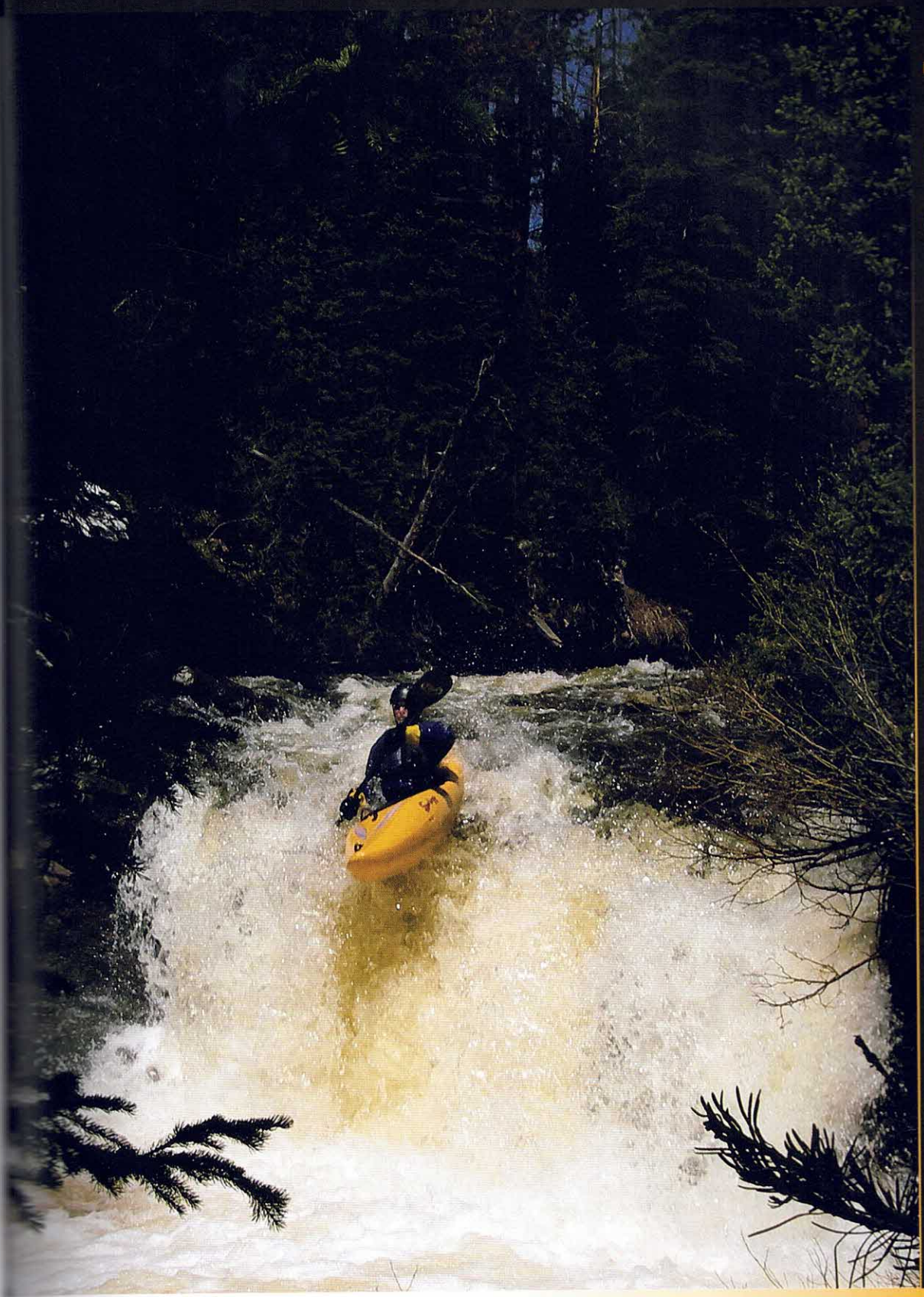
Cataract Gorge of the NF Duchesne

The Cataract of the Duchesne is a spectacular gorge located downstream of the Duchesne Tunnel. One hundred foot cliffs tower on both sides of the gorge and in early season waterfalls cascade off the gorge rim. The Cataract of the Duchesne starts out as stout class V up top, and quickly changes into fun class III. The lead-in, including the spillway are un-run as of 2006. Imagine a tricky 17′ falls dropping into two stout holes, followed by a intense 25′ double drop. Finding the perfect flow to attempt this drop may prove to be the most difficult part, due to the operation of the Duchesne tunnel. Regulators can divert up to 600 cfs at the drop of a hat, and the demands of the tunnel change from day-to-day.

Low-to-medium flows allow boaters to seal

CHRIS SMITH ♦LITTLE DEER CREEK CASCADE—A PORTAGE

Multi-day trips and a willingness to hike will be the requirements for exploration in the Uinta Mountains. And once on the river, the action is remote, good, and sprinkled with wood.



Chris Smith Tim Payne North Fork Duchesne

launch into the cataract at the base of the 25' double drop, and run three stout holes formed by the cataract's bed rock. The last hole is extremely undercut on river right.

Boaters not willing to deal with the formidable lead-in can portage the first ½-mile of the gorge by paddling across the lake just above the entrance of the spillway, and hiking along the river left trail. In a ½-mile a gully forms between the trail and the cataract walls. Hike down the gully to river level and put-in. From here this section of the Cataract remains class III, and continues for approximately three-miles. High flows can make it difficult to boat scout and eddy hop, so use caution.

Towards the bottom of the run the river channelizes, making maneuvering difficult. At times its best to get out and carry on the river left trail and put back in when the river becomes more manageable. Wood tends to collect in the low-lying areas above the take-out, and not in the cataract.

Gauge: It's a barometer, but it's better than nothing. Use Duchesne River near Tabiona, and look for readings over 800 cfs to be safe.

Directions: To get to the take-out, take Hwy 35 southeast from Kamas, then turn left on FR 144. If you come to the Stockmore Ranger Station, you just went too far. Take FR 144 north to Iron Mine CG, which is the take-out. To reach the put-in, take Hwy 150 (Mirror Lake Highway) east of Kamas, and turn right onto Murdock Basin Road. Take the road over to the south side of the pass, and put-in when you reach the river. It sounds easy, but it isn't uncommon for this to require snowmobile access. I guess Utah and RCRE have something in common.

CFS	400<min 800<optimal<1700
Class	III (NR, V+)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	200 fpm crux 100 fpm avg
Length	5 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	visual (or tunnel flow)
Put-in	Murdock Basin Rd
Take-out	Iron Mine CG

Little Deer Creek

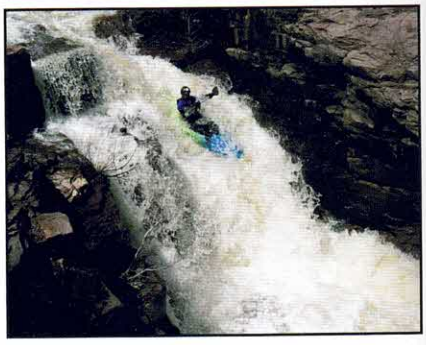
Little Deer Creek is the third largest tributary to the NF Duchesne. Its headwaters are located in Murdock Meadows. One look at the scoured bedrock slate is enough to get any kayaker's blood pumping, yet a closer look reveals something more interesting. This site represents one of the black marks of Utah's many ambitious water projects. June 16, 1963 engineers were attempting to fill the newly christened 75' Little Deer Creek dam when failure occurred. The ensuing catastrophe allowed 14,000-17,000 cfs to breach the earthen dam and plummet close to 1000' in Little Deer Creeks short two-mile span. The true force of this volume of water can only be imagined when considering its plummet off Little Deer Creek's final 90' unrunnable waterfall. In honor of Utah's only dam failure casualty, the first drop is named after four-year-old Bradley Gale Brown, who perished in the flood waters.

The run is a bedrock-slide fest of a half-dozen drops with dicey landings. It's fun, and blatant boat abuse. Willows and mank make up the rest of the run. Do not paddle too far on this river. A manky 20'er leads into a 90' vert-to-death drop.

Flow Information: The flow varies throughout the day, and is best in the afternoon.

Directions: Follow the same directions as the Cataract Gorge section, only put-in when Murdock Basin Road becomes roadside to Little Deer Creek. Early season attempts will probably require snowmobiles.

CFS	75<optimal<200
Class	IV (V-, P)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	425 fpm
Length	2 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Murdock Basin Road
Take-out	Iron Mine CG



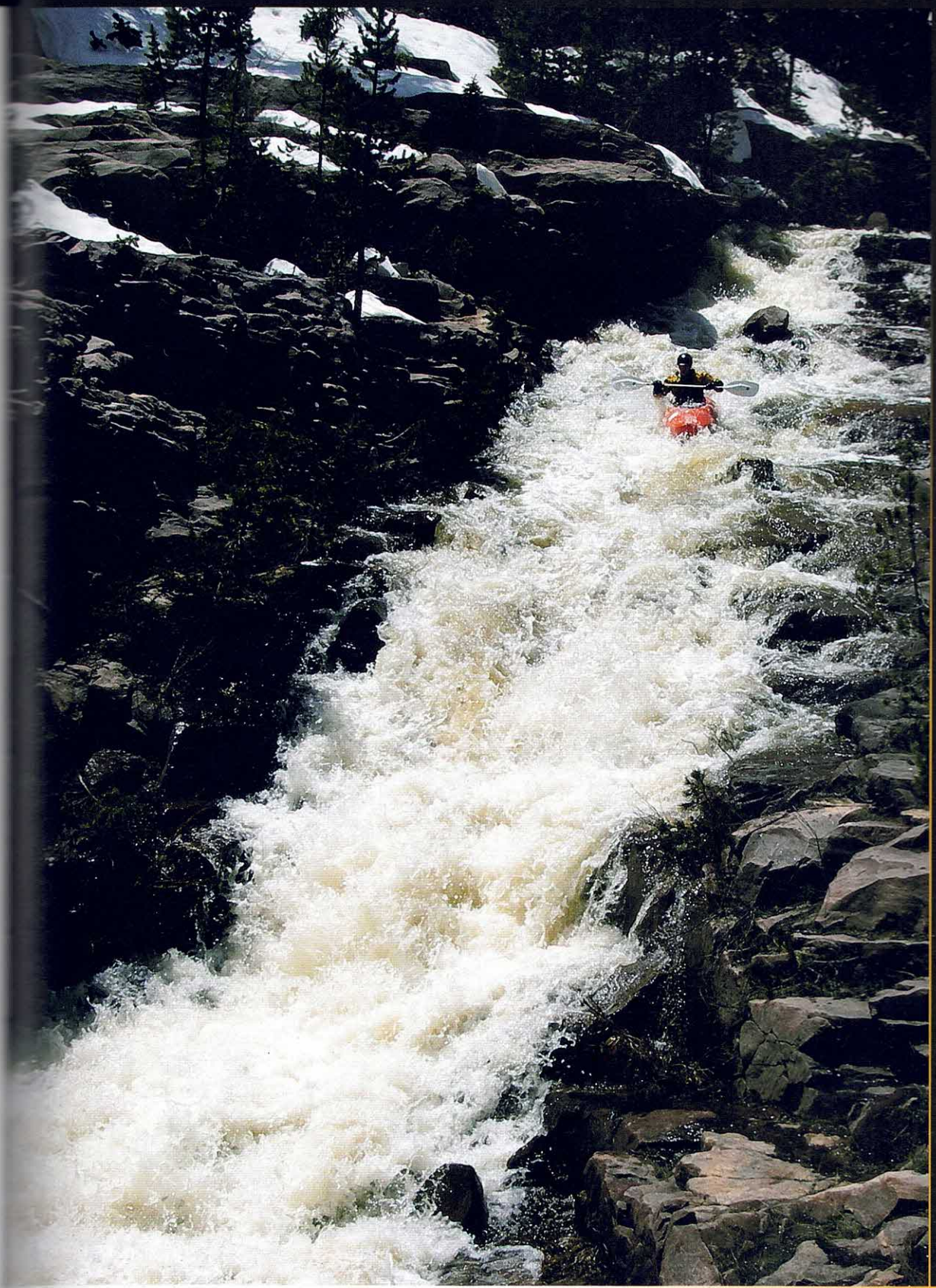
East Fork of the North Fork Duchesne (no beta box)

On our exploration of the NF Duchesne Source we scouted the EFNF Duchesne from the confluence up. We only scouted the last 2.5 miles of the East Fork, but it contains a sweet class IV gorge, steep river running, defined ledge drops and low angle slides. We didn't anticipate finding such a jewel and lacked the time, safety and crew to get it accomplished.

As of 2006 it has yet to be run, so you'll just have to dream about what lies in this 400 fpm crux.

-Sam Chesley (all of NF Duchesne)

Chris Smith Curtis Crabb One Ton of Mayla, Little Deer Creek



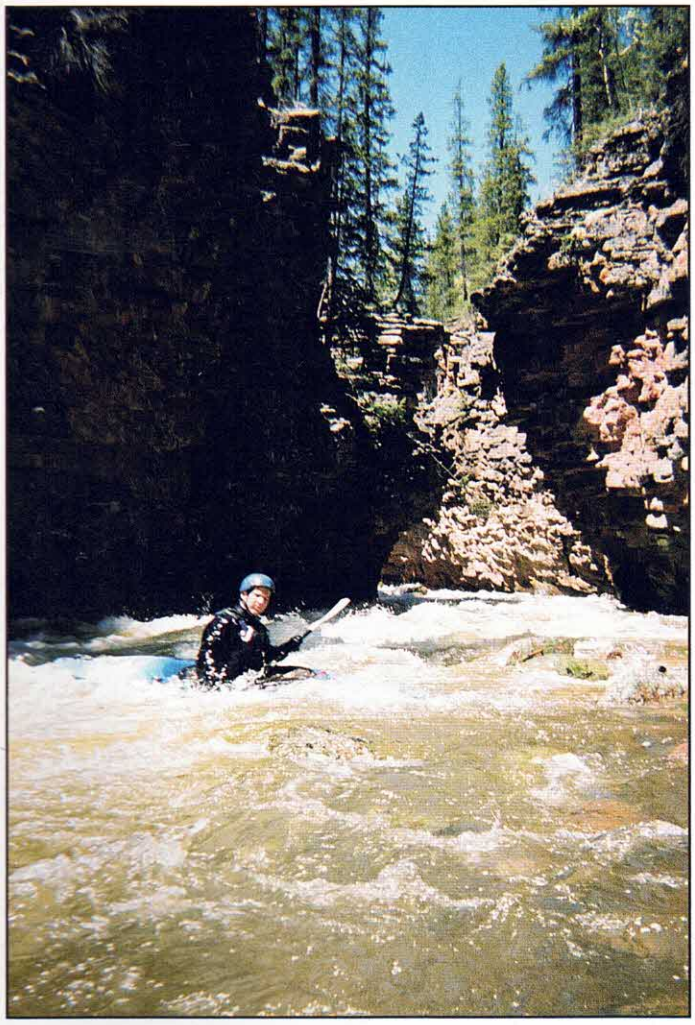
Chris Smith Andy Bradley Gale Brown, Little Deer Creek

Uinta River

The Uinta River drains the highest peaks in Utah and forms the most impressive canyon in its namesake mountain range. This canyon affords unparalleled beauty and solitude as it's in a road less, seldom traversed wilderness area. This is also a drawback, because you're going to have to carry your boat to run it.

Park at the trailhead, shoulder your boat, and start hiking. The bottom five miles or so lack gradient which makes for easy hiking but lousy boating. Eventually the canyon boxes in and the gradient and the elusive Uinta slate present themselves. If you hike 11 miles to Shale Creek a steep bedrock torrent will await you. The main stem Uinta usually has plenty of water, so it's likely that there is more to paddle upstream of this confluence, but difficult access combined with wood issues leave the upper forks un-run as of 2006.

The two miles of box canyon below Shale Creek are reminiscent of the Upper Provo, minus the falls. On the map, or on the hike, you'll recognize this box canyon as the trail migrates east of the river. Shallow slides and short gorges are stacked here with little room to stop, and steep loose slopes make scouting difficult. High flows (over 1500 cfs) render this section a treacherous flush. Things let up a bit as the river nears the trail, and short confined gorges offer bursts of III-IV bedrock slides.



As the gradient decreases paddlers come to a long section of boxed in slate with a few large rapids and portages. All of the drops could be run if they were free of wood. The last five miles of the run are a frustrating mix of beaver dams, braids, and logjams which are not fun and can be dangerous. You'll notice when you're back in civilization when fences and structures of the dude ranch near the trailhead show up, and the final short walk to the car will be comparatively easy.

The window to run this is hard to hit as it likes to all come at once with a climactic 2000+ cfs peak. Similarly, the trail can be snowed in early in the season. Horses can pack in, if you can find a willing outfitter, but early season forays can be stopped by snow, deadfall across the trail, and steep icy slopes. If you do expend the effort, you will be rewarded with an unmatched wilderness boating adventure few have experienced.

Directions: Drive north of Roosevelt on Hwy 121, and continue north of Neola to FR 118, which eventually leads to the trailhead.

-Tim Payne

CFS	600<min<1000<best
Class	IV (V, V+)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	125 fpm
Length	11 miles (variable)
Season	May, June (peak)
Gauge	Uinta Riv nr Neola, UT
Riv Access	Uinta River Trail

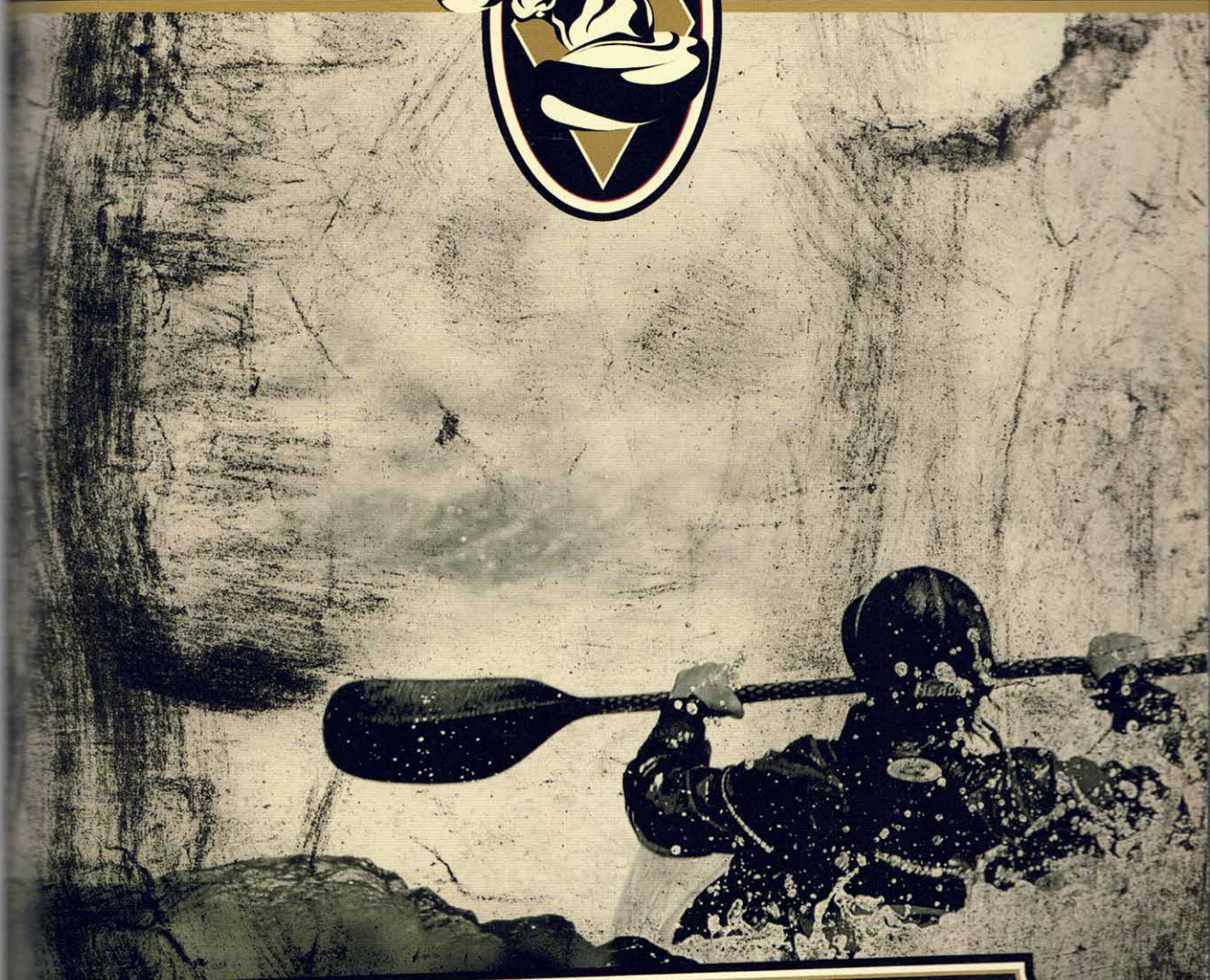
Lake Fork River

If you suddenly find yourself with an afternoon to kill on the south face of the Uintas, check out the class IV whitewater below Moon Lake. The section is found at the end of FR 131. There are a few technical class IV drops before the action ends two miles down at a diversion dam. Take out here, and hike up to do it again.

TIM PAYNE BEAR PAYNE A NICE SHALE GORGE, UINTA RIVER

MONTANA SURF

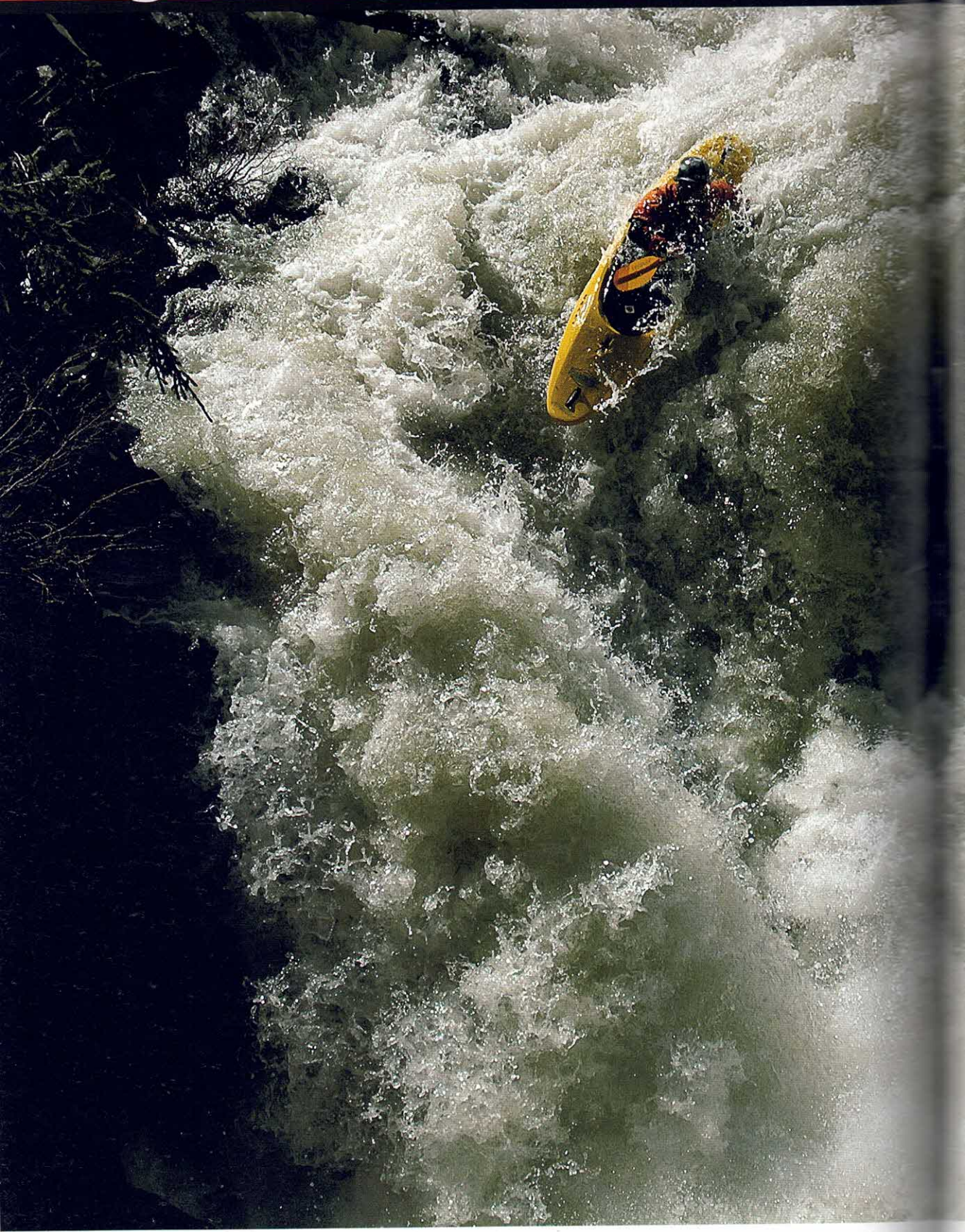
Est. December 2001 Vol. #2 Spring 2007



THE WHITEWATER GUIDEBOOK FOR THE STATE OF MONTANA... & OTHER CLASSICS WITHIN A TANK OF GAS

Check your local paddleshops & let MT Surf help you make it through 'Griz Country'.

See you in Montucky!



Jared Johnson Brad Higinbotham high flow on Twizzler, Treasure Canyon

Treasure Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	250	300	500	800
Character	calm seas w/ rocks	silver coin	gold coin	pirates & holes
Class	V- (V x2, P x2)	V- (V x2, P x2)	V (P x2)	V (V+, P x2)
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	180 fpm			
Remoteness	high—even if you make it to the road, there isn't anything nearby			
Hitchability	very poor			
Length	5.5 miles			
Season	May, June, early July			
Gauge	Alamosa River above Wightman Fork near Jasper			
Put-in	Treasure Creek Road bridge			
Take-out	Stunner Campground			

Unknown and un-run until 2004, the Treasure Canyon section of the Alamosa River was ceremoniously dug up—yet further shrouded in mystery when the map to the class V gold remained a secret by local-paddler request. Tales of the section being the 'new Big South' with sections 'reminiscent of OBJ' lured a handful of teams to the area despite the undisclosed location. The controversial brief history of this run brings out mixed emotions of paddling community camaraderie to this day.

The only similarity to OBJ is the top-notch scenery and the quality is a far cry from the Big South. Nevertheless, the run is damn good. Located to the west of Alamosa and flowing off the east face of the continental divide, Treasure Canyon encloses the headwaters of the Alamosa River, creating numerous mini gorges, small double drops, a few boulder gardens, and a handful of short portages. High water can destroy teams, and given the high alpine nature of the run, the daily flow fluctuation can be great.

Jared Johnson ⅄ Shawn Ruggles ♦Boner Falls

Despite the relatively short length and the relatively easy shuttle, this run takes a few hours to complete—partially due to the blind corners and lack of eddies that require time-consuming scouts for wood.

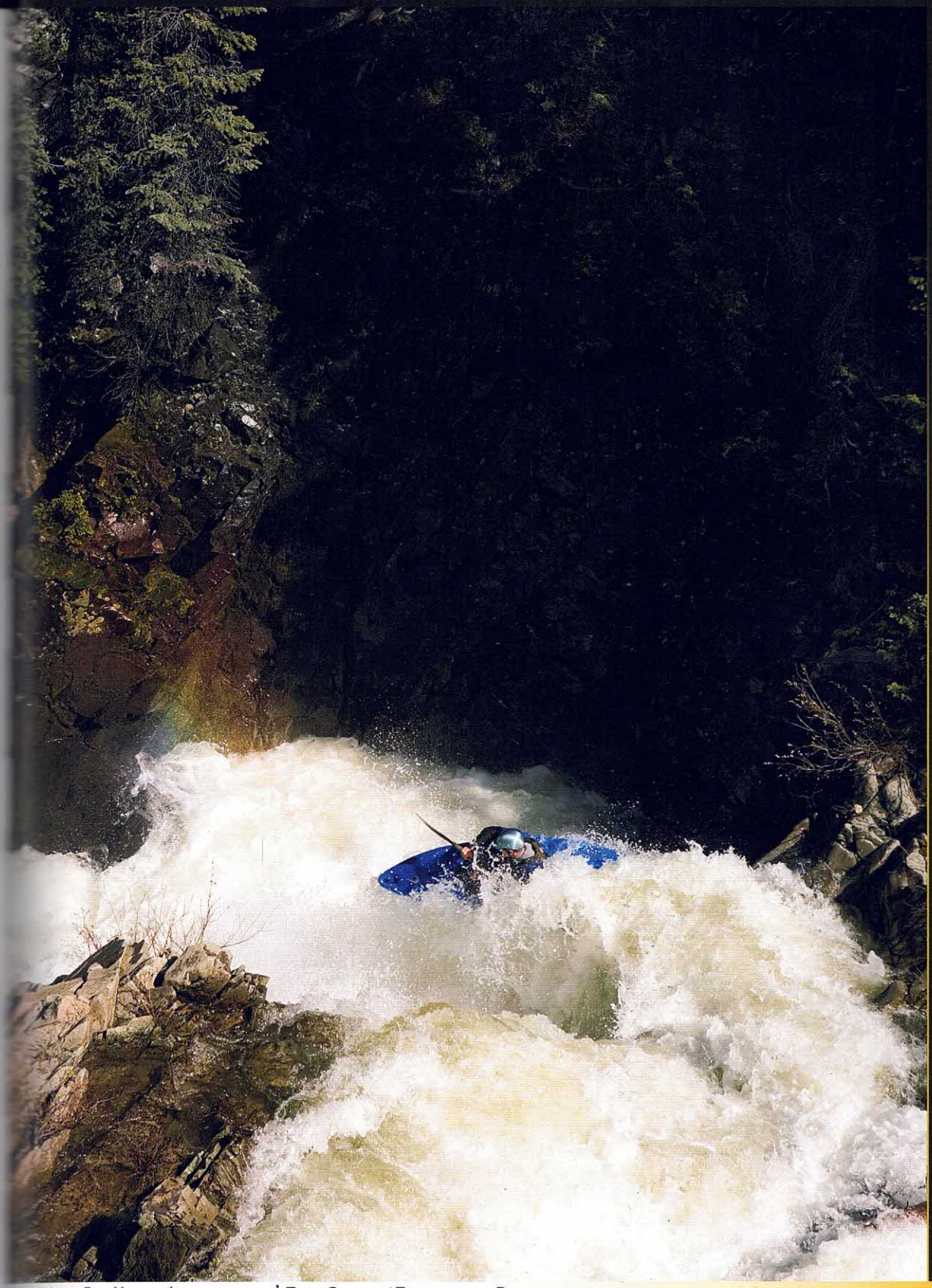
Putting in at the Treasure Creek Rd bridge quickly leads into an odd 10' vert that has caused unsuspected carnage from a shallow landing and weird undercut wall. It's recommended to skip this drop and warm up on Boner Falls 1/3-mile downstream. The first gorge arrives shortly, with a handful of boofs and tight eddies to catch. If problems start here, the road is still close enough for escape. The action stays hot below the gorge, leads to a portage on river right around a scenic 20' falls that lands on rock, and climaxes with 56 Falls.

Stay heads up in the class III wildlife-viewing meadows as a river-right portage awaits at the next horizon. Put in immediately below The Plank (un-run) for Treasure's signature drop, Twizzler. Below here the character changes to more continuous boulder gardens, and at high flows some of the holes in here can throttle a paddler faster than Scooby-Doo gets stoned. The river gradually mellows to swift class III with a few downed trees and strung fences to negotiate.

Directions

From Monte Vista drive south on Hwy 15. Take 12S Rd (FF Rd) west towards Terrace Reservoir. At Terrace this road becomes FR 250, and parallels the river. Drive 14.8 miles west from the first CG, and then take the right fork onto FR 380 (the sign says FR 360). Take out at Stunner CG on river left. To get to the put-in continue up the road to Horsethief Park. Turn left on Treasure Creek Rd and put in at the bridge. If coming from South Fork or Pagosa Springs via Hwy 160, take Elwood Pass (FR 380) if it isn't snowed in.

LOCATED AT THE HEADWATERS OF THE ALAMOSA RIVER, TREASURE CANYON OFFERS UP WATERFALLS OF GOLD, BOOFS OF DIAMONDS, AND LINES OF DELICATE PEARLS—WITH A FEW BOOBY TRAPS TO KICK YOUR GREEDY ASS.



Pagosa • Treasure Canyon

BEN HORTON/BENHORTON.BIZ TODD GILLMAN TWIZZLER, FIRST D

Conejos Pinnacle Gorge

This roadside run features easy access class III paddling and some cool geologic formations, the Pinnacles. Classic San Juan Mountain roadside scenery prevails. The most interesting boating occurs where the river drops below the road into an open volcanic gorge. There is one steeper drop downstream of the Pinnacles that at high flows approaches class IV in difficulty. There is plumbing from Platoro Reservoir giving this run a good opportunity to have runnable flows later into the summer than you might expect.

Directions: The put-in is off FR 250 on the edge of the South San Juan Wilderness, upstream of the Pinnacles at the Trail Creek crossing. For a longer run put in near Saddle Creek on FR105. Take out at the footbridge off of FR 250, found just above the confluence with the SF Conejos.

CFS	250<min<500<best
Class	III (IV)<500<III+ (IV+)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	75 fpm
Length	6.4 miles
Season	dam release
Gauge	Conejos blw Platoro
Put-in	Saddle Creek
Take-out	foot bridge near SF

Lower South Fork Rio Grande (no beta box)

Looking to make a class III- paddling pit stop while driving Wolf Creek Pass? Look no further. Very scenic roadside paddling begins at the take-out for the upper run (next page) and weaves through heavy fishing traffic and man-made trout pools until the South Fork flattens out completely into a broad valley full of camper vans and sun burnt Texans. The best boating comes in the first two miles after the put-in, but you can paddle as far down into the Fun Valley RV hell as you want—and probably take out there if you can talk with a twang.

Directions: The put-in is 9.5 miles west of South Fork on HWY 160 at the Colorado Columbine Rest Stop. The best take-out option is 2.7 miles back towards South Fork at FR 380 bridge.

Wagon Wheel Gap (no beta box)

Once the sight of the annual Wagon Wheel Gap Raft Race, this class II stretch of the Rio Grande can give paddlers a lesson in just how far whitewater paddling has come since the neon spandex of the early eighties. This race featured a recreational, and a professional class that offered some of the top prize money at the time. A beautiful setting, with a deep, almost perfectly formed V-shaped valley frames the scene. Beginners nervous about leaving the safety net of the road will love this stretch as Hwy 140 parallels the entire stretch making for easy scouting and multiple access options. This is not the muddy, silt laden Rio Grande found downstream. This is the headwaters where the water is crisp and clear and the pools are deep and full of gold-medal brown trout. Leave this one to the fisherman when the water is low.

Directions: From South Fork take Hwy 140 northwest, alongside the river to the put-in at Wagon Wheel Gap. A good take-out is at the FR 430 bridge. You can paddle all the way down to the confluence with the South Fork.

Upper Rio Grande

This run is in the beautiful high elevation land of the lost grizzly between Lake City and Creede. Cutting a deep wooded canyon through the edge of the Weminuche Wilderness to the south, this section of the Rio Grande forms the only whitewater stretch of note before the Big River carves the infamous Taos Box some 70 miles downstream. A government trapper shot the second to last confirmed Colorado grizzly near the Rio Grande Pyramids in these headwaters in 1952. At any but flood stage flows, the class III whitewater will test only the rankest intermediate paddlers and at low flows this run should be looked at as a scenic wilderness float and not a serious whitewater or play run. Due to its remoteness, however, only adventuress beginners should attempt this stretch, preferably with an experienced partner or two. You don't want to be solo when you sneak up on a clandestine grizz family do you?

Directions: Find FR 520 off of Hwy 149 between Lake City and Creede in Southwest Colorado. Take FR 520 west towards the Rio Grande Reservoir 1.5 miles and turn left (south) onto a gated road. Drive this public access road through private property down to the river and close the gate behind you. This is the take-out. To reach the put-in get back onto FR520 and head west upstream about 8.5 miles to the River Hill CG.

CFS	200<min<450<best
Class	III
Quality	★★★
Gradient	40 fpm
Length	6.3 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	RG nr 30 Mile Bridge
Put-in	River Hill CG
Take-out	TR 816 Trailhead

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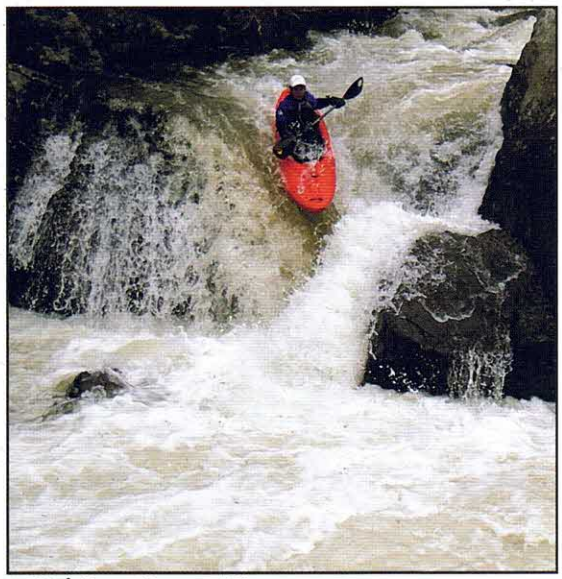
South Fork Rio Grande

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	250	300	400	500
Character	shallow warm-up	rapids good	holes get kick	can't stop
Class	V	V	V+	V+
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★
Gradient	155 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good			
Length	1.8 miles			
Season	May, June			
Gauge	SF Rio Grande at South Fork			
Put-in	FR 410, at confluence with Pass Creek			
Take-out	Colorado Columbine Rest Stop			

The South Fork of the Rio Grande is the highly visible and rarely paddled section of river that parallels Highway 160 on the east side of Wolf Creek Pass. Although previously viewed as a quick class V pit stop on the way to the paddling destination of Durango, the SFRG apparently took offense. More than a handful of paddlers have found that this quick run takes more time than expected, the rapids tend to dish up more than meets the eye, and this 'pit stop' provides a rather worthy two hours of scenic, roadside paddling.

Although 90% of this run's action comes in the bottom ½ mile, most paddlers will enjoy the 1.3 miles of class IV warm up that comes with putting in at the confluence of the SFRG and Pass Creek. Despite occasional wood portages, the entrance offers fun action with few eddies as groups make their way down to the first drop. I recommend scouting both rapids during the run, since the shuttle scout tends to make the rapids look much easier than they actually are (pre-scout the eddies though).



ES Randy Ramirez 8' finale, low water line

The first rapid, marked by the house size boulder on river left, contains a fantastic S-turn entrance to the first eddy. Here, paddlers are forced to squeeze through a few slots, miss a hole, and carry some right angle over the last seven-footer.

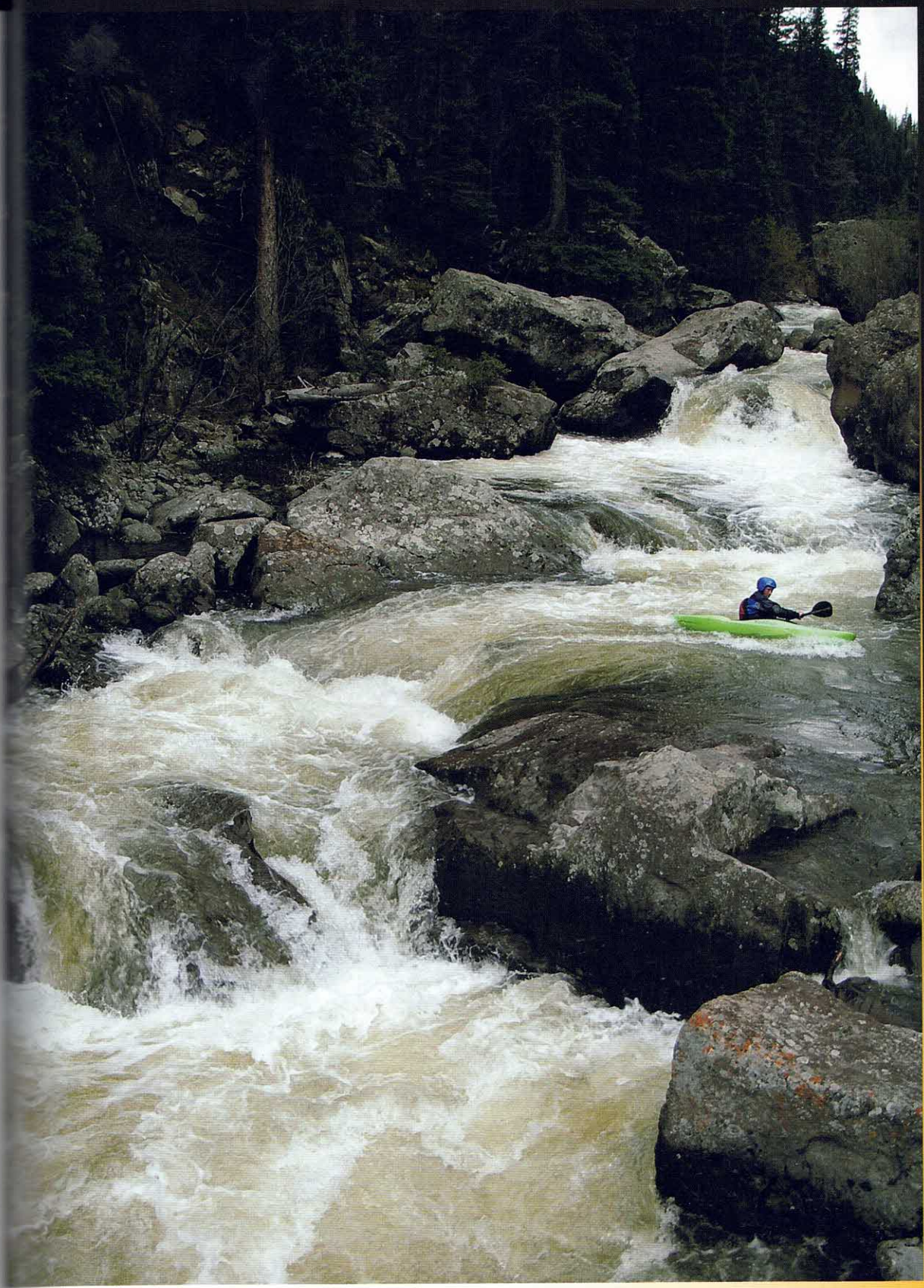
The entrance to the second drop may be one of the trickiest corners I've ever paddled. It's recommended to remain upright. Concrete slabs on river-left mark the entrance into a juicy but only semi-sticky hole, after which, fortunately, there is a small eddy to regroup in. Use the eddy to get a strong peel out to river-right, and bomb down a few more steep sections before finding a micro eddy above the bottom drop. At high water there may not be a stopping point between the two drops. The last 8' drop goes on far river right at high flow, and center at lower flows. Center right contains a fantastic boat/back/ankle breaking rock in the landing, which is somewhat annoying the second time you land on it.

It may be possible to put-on upstream of the tunnel on Pass Creek, but the smaller riverbed tends to collect more wood and less water than the SFRG section below the confluence.

Directions

From the town of South Fork, drive 9.5 miles west on Hwy 160 to the Colorado Columbine Rest Stop. This is the take out. Continue .2 mile to the left side turnout to scout the 2nd rapid (approx. mm176), and/or check the level. If it looks good, continue west on Hwy 160 for another 1.5 miles, and turn right (immediately before the road crosses the river) onto Forest Road 410 at a sign for Big Meadows Reservoir. Take an immediate left into the parking area to put in.

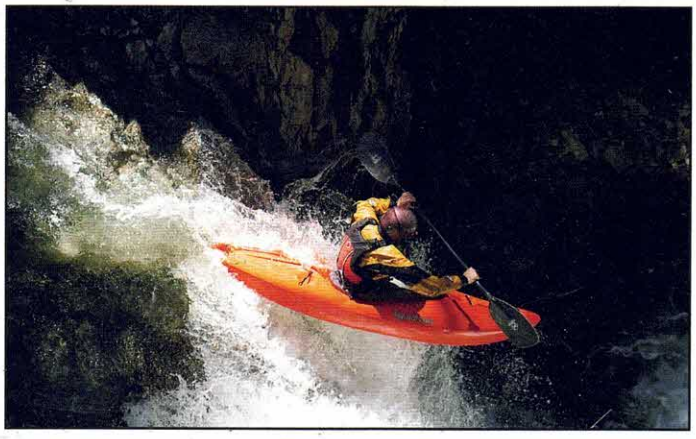
PARALLELING HWY 160 ON THE EAST SIDE OF WOLF CREEK PASS, THE SOUTH FORK CONTAINS A HANDFUL OF MULTI-MOVE DROPS THAT ARE MORE STOUT THAN MEETS THE EYE.



KM ES CRUX AND RUNOUT OF THE FIRST DROP

Upper East Fork San Juan

For those looking to run some of the most picturesque waterfalls in the state, and willing to work for it, the Upper East Fork San Juan will help round out a fun-filled trip to the Pagosa Springs area. Though most of the upper stretches of the East Fork tend to be steep and too manky, there is a ¼ mile long stretch that can be enjoyable, and ridiculously pretty. This section is hidden in the trees after the 4WD road passes high above the visible canyon, and contains seven defined drops. We only ran the first four (Frodo, Aragorn, Arwen, Bilbo) due to an ugly pot hole and wood combo in the fifth, and a questionable landing on the seventh, requiring a tricky river left portage. A short runout gets you out of the gorge, where you can rope the boats out on river right, and hike back to the road. Scout prior to gearing up.



Directions: Drive on Hwy 160 north of Pagosa Springs and take Road 667 (East Fork Rd) south 12 miles to Quartz Rd. Veer left and continue on 667 with 4WD to the top of the hill, and when it drops down a short hill in about a mile, turn into the campsite on the right. This is the put-in.

CFS	80<optimal<160
Class	V+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	500 fpm
Length	1/4 mile
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	campsite on FR 667
Take-out	1/4 mile downstream

Wolf Creek

Located on the west side of its namesake pass, Wolf Creek fills the dreams of the most twisted creekers, and haunts the possibility of successful runs with out-of-control gradient and wood. To add to the problem, there tends to be too much water when most of the other Pagosa area runs are prime. Despite the negatives, if waterfalls are on the radar, it is always a good idea to visually check the flow status when traveling via Hwy 160. Only two drops are regularly run, found immediately downstream of the lower of two hairpin turns. Put in at the top of the Tunnel of Love culvert that ends at the lip of an off-vert falls with a small LZ. Take out below the clean 20'er a few hundred yards downstream and climb up the sketchy scree field—a task in itself.

Upstream of this is the Land of Giants, where stacked 40-70' un-run falls lurk. Downstream features more mostly unrunnable whitewater with wood issues, but a more manageable gradient may improve the odds of an exploratory run.

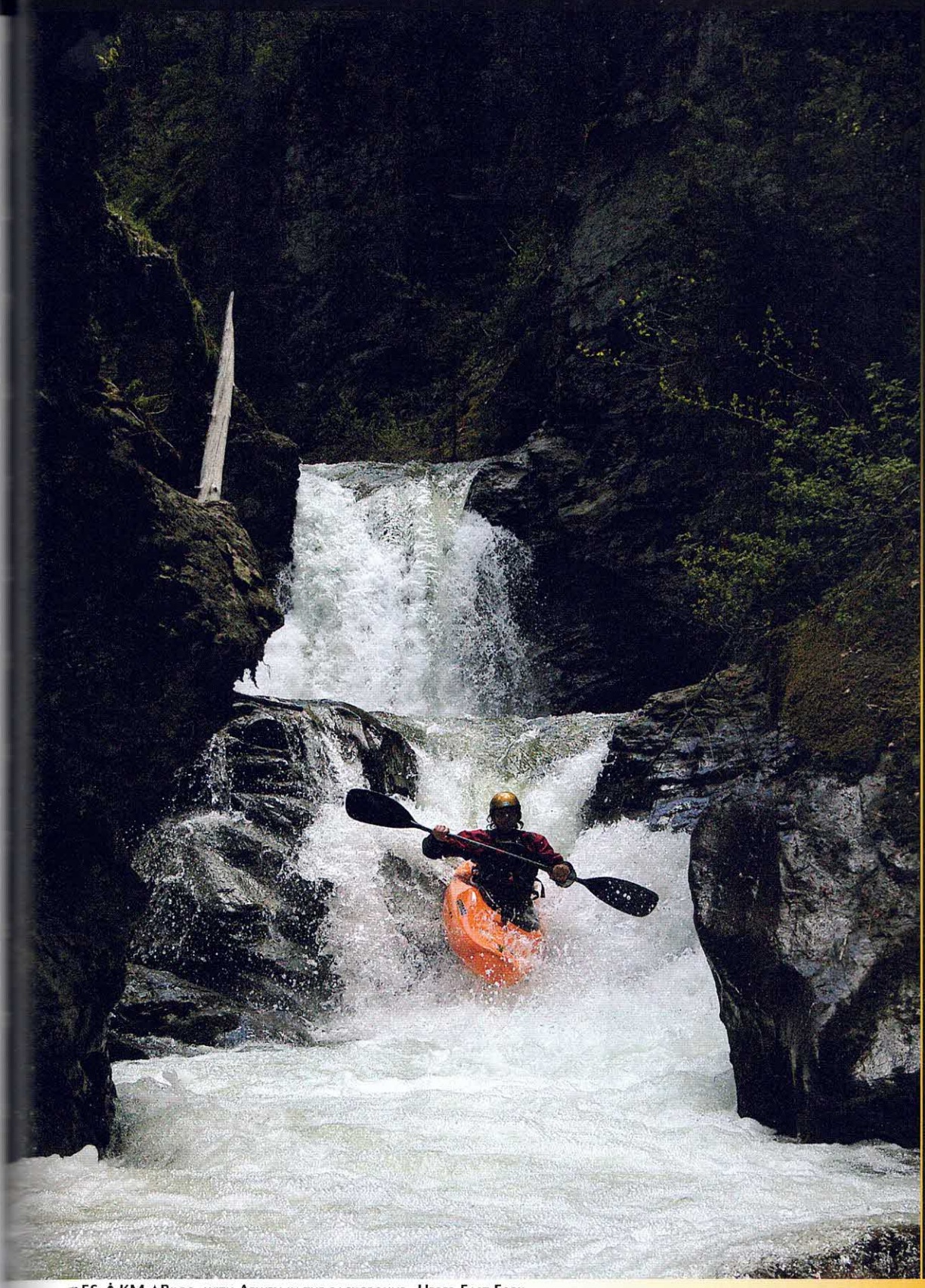
ES 🚶 Evan Ross 💧soaring Timmay, Upper East Fork
Wendy Knick 🚶 Gordon Dalton 💧Wolf Creek huck

Directions: The two commonly run falls can be found on the west side of Wolf Creek Pass. Access the creek at the dirt pull-off one mile east of Treasure Falls, where Hwy 160 hairpins over the creek. To scout the Land of Giants start at the top where the creek is briefly roadside.

CFS	100<optimal<300
Class	V- (surrounded by NR)
Quality	★★
Gradient	560 fpm
Length	1/4 mile
Season	April-July (not peak)
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Hwy 160 bridge
Take-out	below 20' falls

Pagosa • Upper East Fork & Wolf Creek

Just off Hwy 160 to the east of Pagosa Springs, lies a lush valley containing the headwater tributaries of the San Juan River. Two of these contain picturesque waterfalls to huck.



ES KM Bilbo, with Arwen in the background, Upper East Fork

West Fork San Juan

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	175	200	350	500
Character	pin odds increased	channels are filled	very continuous	jumble of V
Class	V (V+)	V (V+)	V+ (NR)	NR
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★
Gradient	230 fpm			
Remoteness	high, but Pagosa is close			
Hitchability	you have to hike			
Length	3 miles			
Season	May, June			
Gauge	visual—should look slightly bony at take-out			
Put-in	where trail meets river, before the foot bridge			
Take-out	FR 648 bridge (if early spring, call 970-247-4874 to ask if the gate is open)			

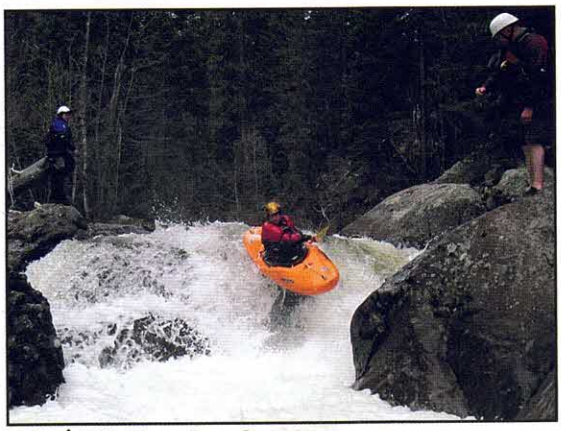
So you're in Pagosa Springs and want to go creeking. Of the Wolf Creek area runs the WFSJ appears to be the best expert creek yet to be explored, although there is potential in just about every direction. Located on the west side of Wolf Creek pass, this little gem charges a relatively easy three-mile hike as the entrance fee, and rewards paddlers with top-notch boulder garden action. Don't forget the elbow pads.

With a steep riverbed full of rounded boulder gardens, this run demands your attention and precise boof strokes, especially with significant flows above 250 cfs. From the put-in at the base of a downhill set of switchbacks, you will have a ½-mile of easy warm-up before the first rapid, Three Boof Shuffle (V). This series is representative of what's downstream. Steep and manageable boulder gardens continue until you reach Signature Drop (V+), where the flow is divided by a large tree trunk, with the right channel offering a sweet 3' boof that leads into a wild seam. Maintain hull speed, because below this seam is a crucial left move to avoid a nasty hole backed up by an undercut boulder. Setting safety here is highly recommended, and this will be the most likely portage of the run.

The action remains steep and technical for another mile or so before the creek mellows and the scouting subsides with a quick float to the take-out bridge. Although short, this run requires a lot of scouting without a guide, so plan on spending upwards of five hours (including the hike) to complete the run. It is possible to put on higher up the trail, but recently it has had enough wood portages that the extra hike isn't justified. Celebrate at the take-out, and then high tail it to Pagosa for ice cream, grub, and the hot springs to nurse the wounds.

Directions

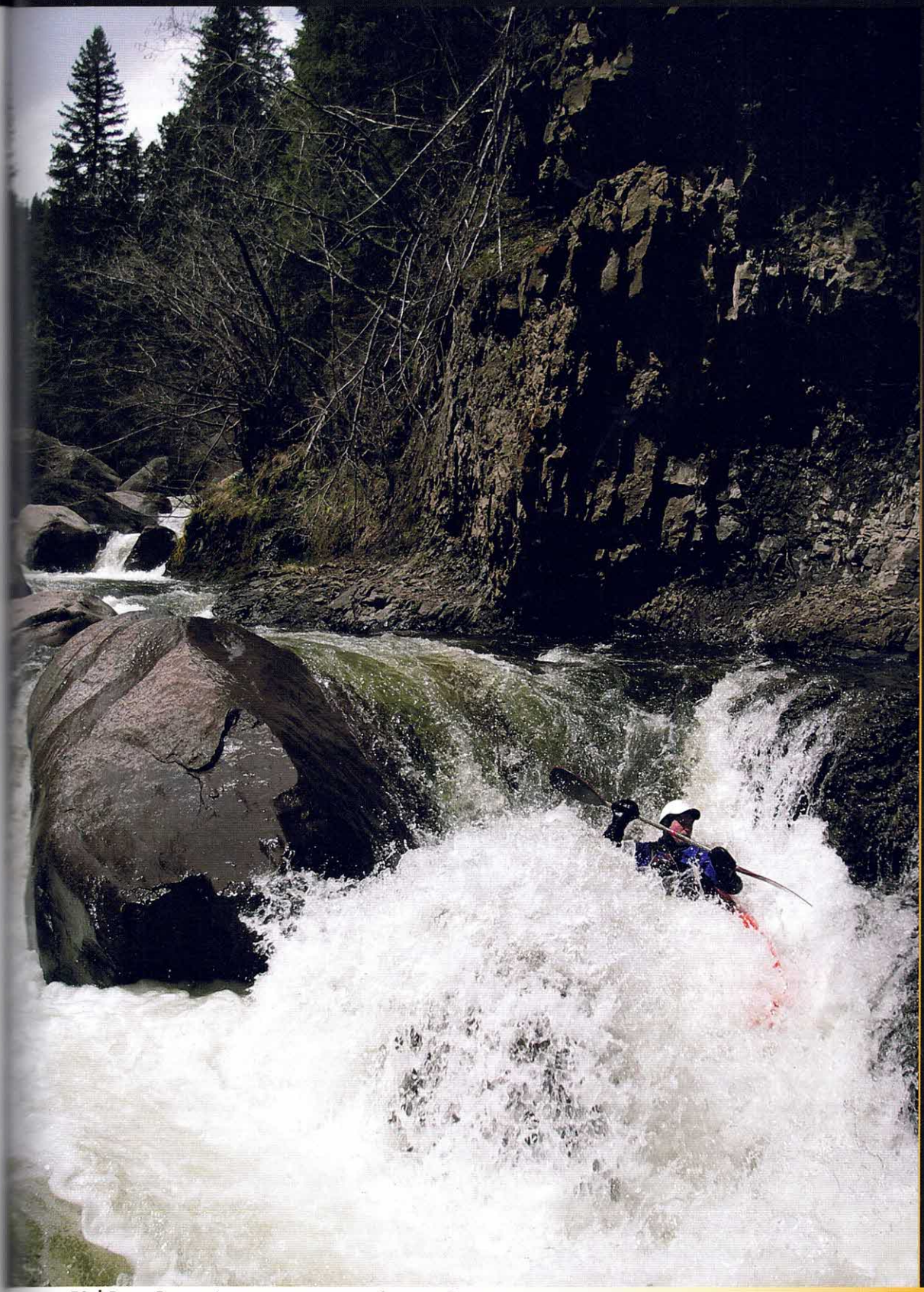
Turn north onto FR 648 from Hwy 160 (west of Wolf Creek Pass), one mile below the Treasure Falls viewing area, and continue until the road crosses the bridge at an undeveloped campground. This is the take-out. To reach the put-in continue driving on the frontage road until it dead-ends at the Rainbow Hot Springs trailhead. Hike up the well-maintained trail and put in where the trail switchbacks down to the river.



ES KM THREE BOOF SHUFFLE

KM ES ENTRANCE TO SIGNATURE DROP

As some would say, "it's a little nugget." A fairly easy hike rewards paddlers with the best class V in the area. Bring the backpack and the elbow pads.



Pagosa • West Fork San Juan

ES Randy Ramirez unnamed action below Signature Drop

The Legend of Bikini Creek

By Evan Stafford

Rain. My God I thought. Does it rain like this in the Rockies? Sheets coming down from the sky. Sheets so uniform and thick that they are forming a hydraulic, almost like a waterfall curtain, in the deep jade pool I am beginning to feel trapped in. The canyon walls, once host to intermittent rays of sunlight, have given way to a drenched and cloudy darkness. It is well into the afternoon and the downpour has stripped all color from my surroundings. Everything. Black and white.

Flash back to the scout. The gorge looked tame enough. The creek running clear and the sun shining. The sun always seeming to boost the old confidence levels. If you're going to go, you might as well go while the sun is out. The forest walls too thick and steep to really consider portaging. The gorge appearing so runnable. Steep and committing for sure. No harder though than the bedrock slides and waterfalls I'd already encountered. Walking back to my boat, inching along the rim, grasping the old growth Blue Spruce. The Doug-fir. Trusting these trees with my entire weight dangling over the rapids below. The smell of sap on finger tips. Mind racing.

What was I thinking dropping into this wilderness solo. The creek haunting me for days. At the last minute the entire crew bailing. Not able to let go. Let the maps and the calculations slip from my hand. Fall back into the drawer. Left them on the kitchen table instead. The gradient staring me in the face through every meal. The drive through the night. The mate keeping my head from nodding. My hands shaking. The San Juan Wilderness at dawn. Pure beauty. Sun rising, Stretching. Yawning. Hiking with a heavy plastic backpack. Up. Over the pass. Views of the valley snaking off to the south. Ominous thunder, not a cloud in the sky. The gorge highly visible. Looking deep. Dark. Boxed in only a few miles downstream.

Sun rising. Streamside camp. In deep. Nowhere left to go but downstream. Stuff the stow floats behind the seat. Deep inhalation. Exhale into the tube filling the float bag. Repeat. Slide into the shallow stream. One stroke in front of the next. Horizon. Warm-up tight bedrock slide. Ace it. Horizon. Manky slide to off-vert falls. Plug it and resurface whooping it up with no one but the river to hear my exaltations. So, so good. Drop after drop. Deeper into the canyon. Making good time. And then the gorge.

The scout. I've already described the scout. Sketchy at best. And the portage? Best not to think about that. Very runnable. Very runnable indeed. River level scouting seemed possible at nearly every section of the two-mile long box — but one. Three blind drops. The first with a river level view from a shelf near the lip. Once past drop one. Committed. Between sheer granite walls. The next two rapids separated by the most beautiful pool. The river rocks visible through the translucent jade water from at least a hundred feet off the deck. Both drops looking good to go from that vantage as well. Powerful but clean. Drop two, a double drop. 10' flake boof to 15' near vertical slide into a crack. Flushing. Hopefully. Drop three, a vertical 25 footer into a tight cauldron. Beyond, a great flatwater chasm, a still commiting but class IV boogie section, and the walls eventually receding to forested river banks.

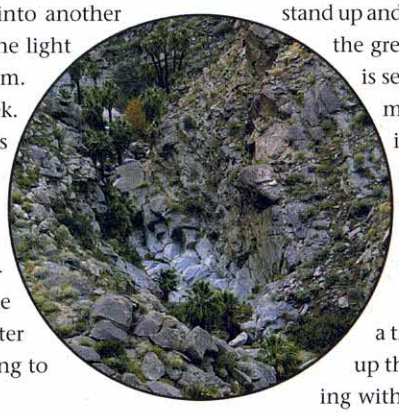
Black and white. I am committed in the jade pool below drop-two. Does it rain like this in the Rockies? This is like some rainforest type precip. BC. NZ. This isn't like any storm I've ever been through on the river. The sun was still shining while I was scouting drop-one. When did this storm roll in? So quick. Unexpected. I was so focused on nailing that flake boof. I didn't notice the sky darkening. Then the downpour. Water rumbling in the distance. Rushing. Louder. Mind racing. Flash Flood. No. Yes. No!

Crash. I see a torrent of water cascading off the rim from a tiny side creek, arcing into my jade pool. My jade pool turning brown. Murky. Muddy. My position-stable. Escape? Escape! But where? Water dripping down the polished gorge walls. Climb? Not a handhold in sight. Carved out walls on river right. Overhead. Overhanging. I'm under the left gorge wall in a carved out eddy literally watching the water level rise. Muddying my pool. How long before I'm crouching under this wall? Water rising too fast. Inching towards the ceiling of my carved out eddy. Over my shoulder the blind horizon. Remembering the line. It's clean! Inching to the roof. Peel out. Peel out! My paddle scrapes on the polished ceiling as I pull into the current and charge for the lip. I'm blinded again by the rain. Eyes closed. One, two, three. Last stroke at the lip. Grab some water. Tuck.

Roll up. Fight. Stroke. Stroke. Stroke. Grab the wall. Anything. Push off. Stroke. Stroke. Stroke. Fight. Stroke. Pool. Breathe. Eyes wide open. Black and white. Still. Sheets coming down. Get out of this gorge. Now! Flatwater race strokes into the boxed chasm. Rounding a blind corner. More flatwater. Rain pounding me. Pecking at my exposed neck. Water level visibly rising. Racing flailing strokes. Get out! Rounding another blind corner I see a shaft of light penetrating the canyon bottom. A crack in the dragon's skin. The thick shower unrelenting. Through the sheets of rain a mirage. Could it be? Sunlight pouring into the

gorge through a break in the canyon wall? Rainbows in the downpour.

Paddling faster. To the light! My escape? Anxious last strokes. Please. A side creek to crawl out on. A bench to spend the night on and weather the storm. Anything. Please. Praying. Gliding. Paddle resting across my boat. Gliding into the light. The sunlight reflecting off a flat and clear pool. The pool extending into another small side gorge. Rounding a bend, the light miraculously twisting in from upstream.



Nervous strokes into the side creek. Please let there be a way out. Up this creek. Please. Rain pouring down. Beautiful in the suns rays. The main river truly flashing now. The torrent raging brown and muddy past the confluence behind me. In front of me the sun illuminating the crystal blue water of this saving tributary. Color returning to my world.

Paddling up into the tributary I can't help but notice the storm. It is still raging on in every direction around me. The creek a perfect anomaly. The light only existing within its tight canyon walls. The color stripping sheets of rain behind me. In front of me, the rains abating as I near the first bend. Inching closer to the source of the light. Nearing the corner brilliant green ferns hang down from the side canyon's rim. I can no longer feel the rain pounding me. The light grows brighter. Blinding me. Sunshine fills my mind. Squinting I round the corner. Squinting so tight I can barely make out my new surroundings. They are blurry but they are wearing bikinis!

Bluebird skies. Ferns overhang the creek. Polished, but dry, granite frames an enormous white sand river beach in front of me. The creek climbs up into a lush forest in the distance. Still squinting I crawl out of my kayak and drag my wet carcass to the shade of a small grove of palm trees. Palm trees? In the shade now, my eyes widen. Thatched palm leaf huts line the river bank. A great wooden deck runs out over the turquoise water playing host to a dark cherry-wood banquet table. A pair of long and tan legs step into my frame of vision.

Words I can't understand come at me a mile a minute. I say hello and smile as I look up into the green eyes of an amazingly attractive woman. She is wearing nothing but a thin string bikini of the leaf variety. Her cheekbones are high, exotic. Her lips are bold and pink. The sun filters through her long, walnut brown hair. Removing my helmet I see more of these women approaching in the distance. They are all tall and lean and tan. They are wearing nothing but leaf and rope bikinis. They are chirping like birds in a language I can't quite make out. Portuguese I suspect. I can't say for certain. They surround me, in a friendly manner, but it is more than I can take. My eyes roll back into my head. I try to fight it. I can't. Darkness.

I awake startled. She is standing over me. Patting my forehead with a cold wet cloth. The sunlight slips inside the palm leaf hut in skinny beams. It is hot. I am sweating. The cold cloth is refreshing. I sit up. Where am I? I stand up and walk towards the door. I stare out onto the great wood deck. The cherry-wood table is set for 14. She takes my hand and walks me onto the deck. On the beach there is a raging fire. A wild boar is skewered over the fire with two of the leaf clad women spinning it towards perfection. The other ten women are partaking in various tasks, preparing for a feast.

She leads me off the deck. We wander a trail through a set of gigantic palm trees up the hillside. We arrive at a garden bursting with fresh herbs and vegetables. She tugs and I follow as she picks tomatoes, onions, green peppers, jalapenos, mushrooms, you name it. We each carry a basket over our heads back down to the beach.

We feast. Myself and 13 leaf clad women, at a cherry-wood banquet table, on a deck over the turquoise blue water of Bikini Creek. We cheer, clanking goblets full of wine, over and over again to whatever they want. I can't understand them but I'm as enthusiastic as anyone. I retire to a hammock for the night and sleep like a child on Thanksgiving—in the Bahamas.

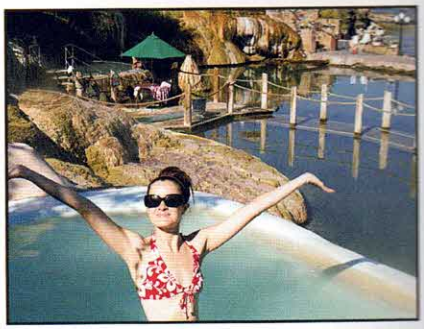
In the morning I wander back to my boat at sunrise believing all of the women to still be asleep. I am donning my gear when I see her come running. She stops well short of me and looks me deeply in the eyes. I am so grateful but I have no idea how to express it. "Thank you," I say weakly. Her stare is undeterred. I reach into my kayak and pull out a gift. It is all that I have that might be of any value to her. My trusty 4-piece breakdown fly rod.

I hold it out to her. She has no idea what it is. I put the segments together and spend the next hour teaching her to cast. These women in bikinis, they are used to spearing monster trout in the creek by hand. She is a natural. I leave my entire fly box with her and I can see in her eyes that she understands my gratitude. I paddle out the way I came in. My last views of Bikini Creek are of her casting my fly rod and screaming with joy as she pulls out a jumper.

The flood on the main river has subsided. The flow has nearly dropped to the level I put on with. I easily paddle out of the box canyon through the class IV boogie and make it back to my truck by lunch. I pop the tailgate and open my first triumphant beverage. Cheers, to another fine wilderness trip down the river.

Upper San Juan Beginner

On the eastern end of the Weminuche Wilderness, deep within the Southern Rockies, lies a sleepy town long overshadowed by its western neighbor, Durango. But with a play park, southwestern style hospitality and a wide array of paddling options, it's time to officially pin up Pagosa Springs on the paddlers' destination map. And when you're done boating for the day there isn't much more rejuvenating than an after paddle soak session. The Springs Resort nestled along the San Juan River right in town offers 18 riverside hot pools, posh accommodations, massages and spa treatments—enough to appease even the most ardent of shuttle bunnies.



East Fork San Juan

The East Fork contains the only class IV rapid of the San Juan beginner stretches and fantastic scenery surrounds this short stretch. Scout the crux rapid shortly after crossing over the first bridge. Debris has been falling from the river-right hillside for a number of years, and with it some unfortunate wood placement. As of 2006 there was only one portage, with good eddy placement above. Beginners won't have the luxury of a good warm-up before coming upon the rapid, so if the scout yields concern, put in downstream at the first bridge and enjoy the III- shallow float to the campground.

Directions: Take Hwy 160 north of Pagosa Springs, and turn right onto East Fork Road 0.8 miles to the campground. To reach the put-in continue upstream to the first bridge, or the second if more action is desired.

CFS	1k<min<1.5k<best
Class	III- (IV)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	100 fpm
Length	2.7 miles
Season	May to June
Gauge	SJ @ Pagosa, estimate
Put-in	East Fork Road bridge
Take-out	East Fork CG

Pagosa Springs Whitewater Park and Town Run

Adding to their mountain town status, Pagosa Springs jumped on the whitewater park bandwagon recently by adding a few small manmade features, the best of which sits directly next to the hotsprings that line the bank. Yeah ... sick. Although the local kayak scene seems to be rudimentary, the features appear to be pretty good at certain levels, and the easy access throughout town makes this a quick stretch (less than an hour).

Directions: A good put-in can be found at the Conoco station on the east edge of town, directly off of Hwy 160. The whitewater park and an easy take out are most accessible from behind the courthouse on river right, immediately downstream from the hotsprings.

CFS	600<min<1k<best
Class	II (III-)
Quality	★★★
Length	1 mile
Season	May to July
Gauge	San Juan @ Pagosa
Put-in	Conoco Station
Take-out	Courthouse

Mesa Canyon

This is the best beginner stretch in the Pagosa area. Often combined with the town run, Mesa Canyon flows south through a scenic canyon where beginners can test their skill on the small rapids that top out with solid class III. The most action comes from a handful of manmade ledges, and a few natural rapids shortly after. Scout when uncomfortable. Streamside signage encourages paddling parties to stay on the water, so please do so when safe. A long day is necessary to complete this run due to the 13.4 miles of slow moving water.

Directions: Use any of the town run access points for a put-in. To get to the take out drive south on 8th, and turn right on Apache Way. This turns into Trujillo Road, and eventually leads to the take out (after passing the landfill) at a dirt pullout on the left—basically where the road meets the river for the first time.

CFS	600<min<900<best 2200<high
Class	III-<1500<III+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	30 fpm
Length	13.5 miles
Season	May to July
Gauge	San Juan @ Pagosa
Put-in	Pagosa Springs
Take-out	Trujillo Road

ES Nicole Stafford The Springs, riverside to the WWP

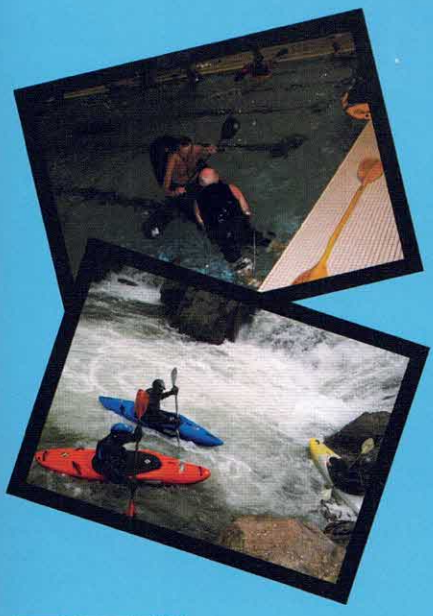
We're a kayak oriented whitewater club based in Colorado Springs. Since 1975, our enthusiastic group of paddlers provides a place to meet other river loving people and explore Colorado rivers and beyond.

PPWC

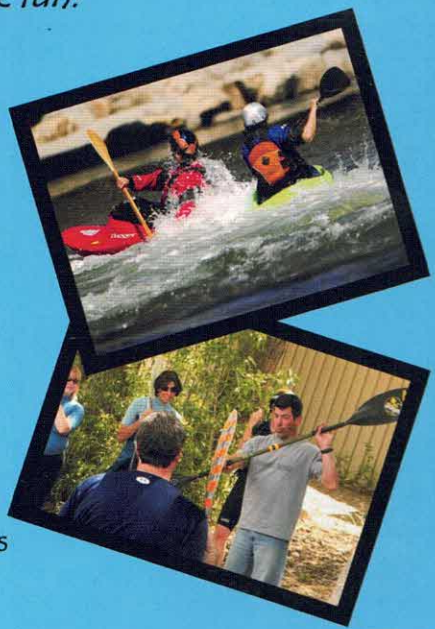
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club

With a wide range of talent and experience, the group shares stories, tips, hidden river gems, camping areas, and adventure destinations. We'll be paddling somewhere, in something and just playing. All are welcome.

Please come join in the fun!



- Rolling Instruction
- Pool Sessions
- Beginner Clinics
- River Trips
- Playboating Clinics led by pro paddlers
- Kayak Demos
- Downriver Clinics
- Club Events
- Overnight Club Trips



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

PPWC is proud to be an affiliate club of American Whitewater and American Canoe Association. We work to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to recreate on them safely.

ACA American Canoe Association

www.pikespeakwhitewaterclub.com

Piedra River

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	600	800	1700	2500
Character	bottom only	bottom only	top to bottom prime	easy big water feel
Class	IV- (IVs)	IV- (IVs)	IV (V-)	IV+ (V-)
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	55 fpm			
Remoteness	slightly committed lower, wilderness in upper			
Hitchability	poor			
Length	19.2 miles			
Season	May, June (early peak)			
Gauge	Piedra River at Arboles (barometer)			
Put-in	Piedra River Road bridge			
Take-out	Piedra River CG near Hwy 160			

Located just upstream of Hwy 160 in the south central mountains of Colorado, the Piedra offers excellent intermediate and advanced wilderness paddling. Though often skipped over by visiting paddlers headed to the kayaking mecca of Durango, the run is seeing increased popularity as Pagosa Springs comes into its own as a paddling destination. With lush forested scenery and two gorges deep in the Weminuche Wilderness, the river within is well worth the trip.

The gorges are named in reverse order, with the Second Box in the upper section, and the First Box in the lower. Although the river can be run in a single day, the nearly 20 miles of paddling combined with a long shuttle tends to cause groups to run the sections separately. The predominately class II-III whitewater in the upper and the predominately class III-IV in the lower further influences this decision. The water is cold, so dress warm for either section.

Second Gorge

The upper section meanders through about six miles of scenic class II before the walls come in, signaling the entrance to the two-mile long second box canyon. Paddlers will be faced with two drops in here, Lone Pine (III) and the Limestone Rapids (III), before the exit and the bridge at the end of Forest Service road 699. This marks the end of the upper warm-up section, and the beginning to the stouter action.

First Gorge

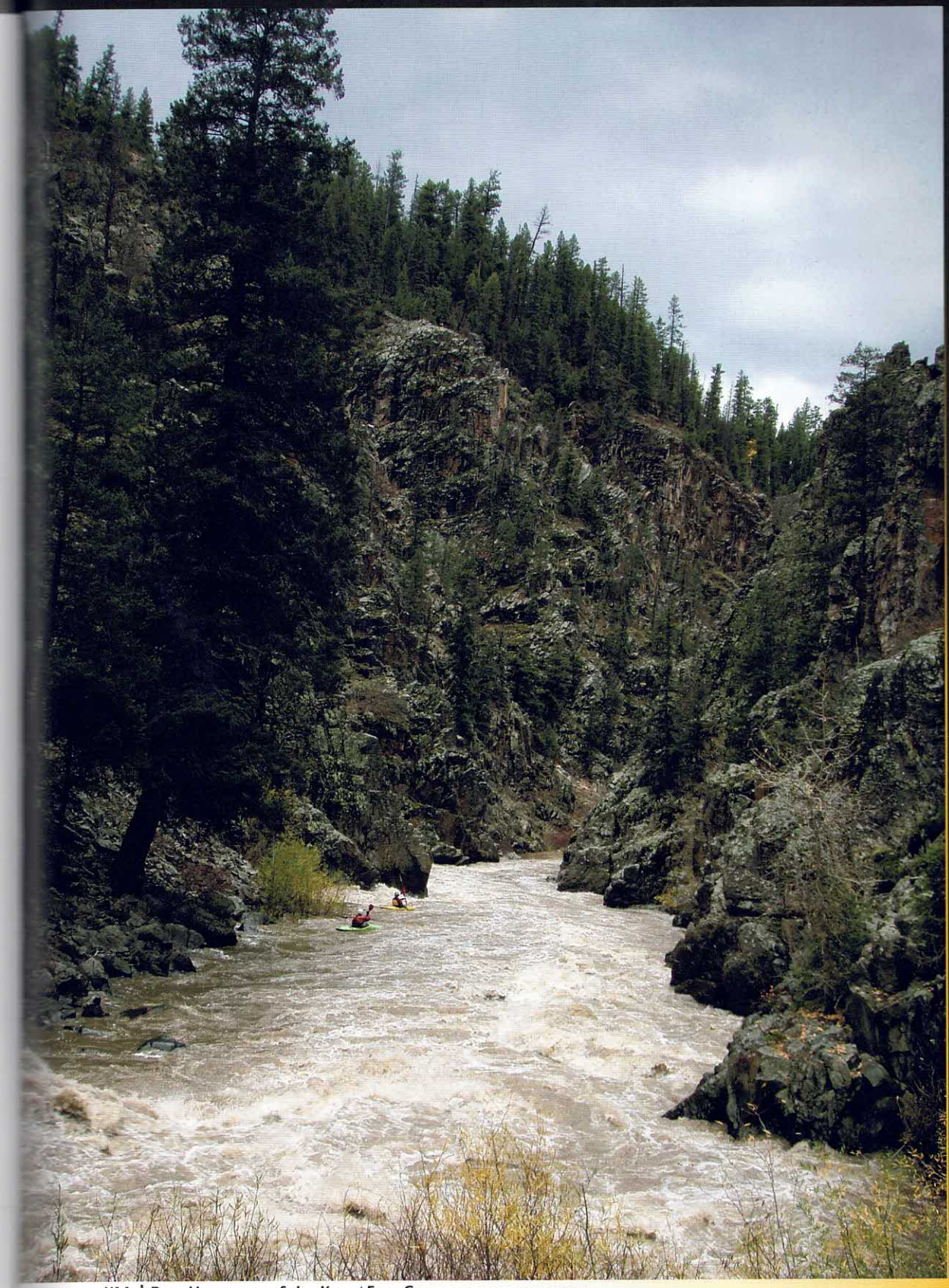
The lower section starts off quickly with a fantastic sheer-walled gorge, and rapids that approach class IV in difficulty rather quickly (most of which can be portaged). All of the rapids here are of the boulder garden variety due to the actively eroding cliff walls overhead, creating a pool drop character as the rock piles dam up the river between the drops. Two drops at the crux of the run are formed by actively moving mudslides on river right, the first of which bears the name Mudslide. The second, Eye of the Needle, is the most likely portage of the run with an ugly divider rock and laterals feeding into the upstream face. It's becoming easier with current shifts in the riverbed. Watch for wood in the run out of this one, and enjoy the class III wave trains for the remaining 3/4 of the run, with a hot springs on river left at low flow.

Directions

Halfway between Pagosa and Bayfield, Hwy 160 crosses the Piedra. Take FR 622 (FS 699) north one mile to the Piedra River CG, the take-out for the lower. If just running the lower, continue north on FR 622 until the road dead ends at a bridge crossing the river (approximately 10 miles). To reach the put-in for the upper, drive back to Hwy 160, and head east until a short ways before Pagosa Springs, turning left (north) on FR 631, aka Piedra River Road. The road meets the river 16 miles upstream.

Joe Keck Nick Wigston Eye of the Needle

With lush forested scenery and two rugged gorges, the Piedra welcomes kayakers. A usually tame river turns pushy at high flow, with on-the-fly freestyle in the run out. Low flow hot springs.



KM Brad Higinbotham & Joe Keck First Gorge action at high water

KM ♦ ASPEN TREES, INDEPENDENCE PASS

Upper Roaring Fork

CFS	150<optimal<450
Class	V+ (NRs)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	380 fpm crux
Length	3.2 or variable
Season	June
Gauge	RF abv Difficult Crk
Put-in	blw Weller Lake
Take-out	Difficult CG

The Upper Roaring Fork has many miles of potential for the expert kayaker, but to this day remains largely unexplored. I'd venture to guess that fewer than ten groups of paddlers have explored this section since CRC2 first introduced it in 1999. Curiosity snagged the better of us, when after multiple times of driving by the headwaters we finally decided to give it a shot, pulling over at a large paved pullout immediately below Weller Lake. We put on to a set of very steep cascades, but we were able to pick them apart with eddy-to-eddy moves. The finale was a tricky ferry that required an over-the-log move, miss the undercut, and then finish the rest of the V+ section with a must-make eddy. A scout around the next corner revealed massively scary drops, with a tight must-make eddy inbetween. Before I had a chance to thoroughly scout, the rest of the team started hiking out. We spent a good two hours running less than a ¼ mile of whitewater.

I pretty much blew off the Upper Roaring Fork as a legitimate run, and it wasn't until a few years later that I realized our mistake. We inadvertently put on at the top of a rapid that CRC2 described as, "an obvious wood-choked class VI rapid." Although we deemed it V+, we were supposed to put in below. Apparently this guidebook author didn't always read the guidebook in detail. Lesson learned.

Use the dirt pull-off on the outside of the curve, downstream of the Weller Lake parking lot. Rope the boats down to the river after the Massive Corner Drops. The action starts off quick and mellows around Tagerts Lake before picking up to full steam in Difficult Canyon. Wood and pins are a constant concern throughout the boulder garden whitewater. The highlights of the run are the super-steep gradient and boofs. Out of state paddlers will probably hate the style of whitewater, as it epitomizes steep and manky. All paddlers should pre-scout most of the run, not only for the rapids, but also for the access and the shifting wood situation. The best option would be to run it with an Aspen local.

Directions: Difficult CG can be found 4 miles southeast of Aspen along Hwy 82. The official put-in is 3.2 miles upstream, just in case it isn't 'obvious.'

Castle Creek

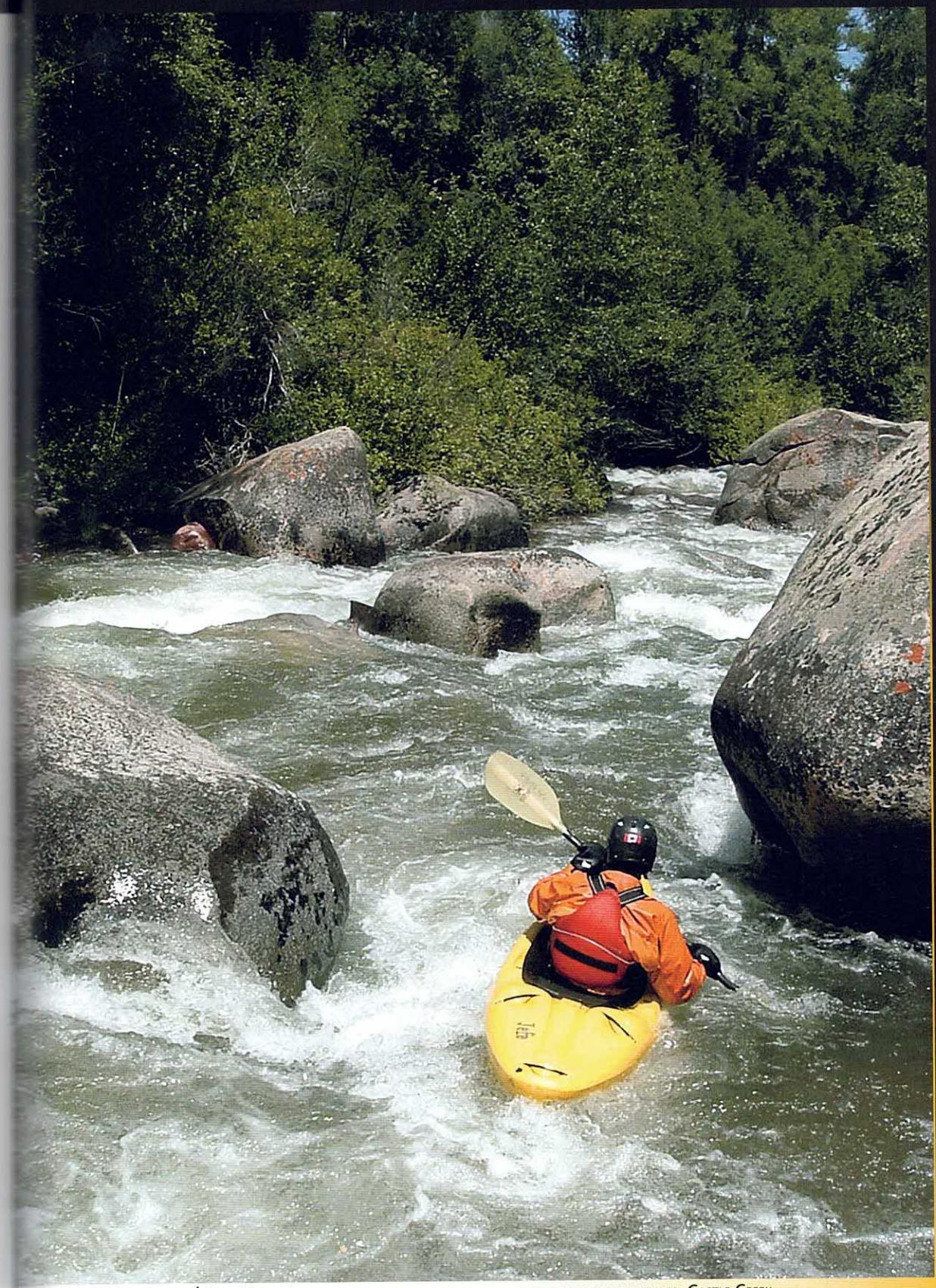
CFS	450<min<800<best
Class	IV+<2000<V-
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	157 fpm
Length	2 miles
Season	May, June, July
Gauge	RF @ Maroon Crk
Put-in	Aspen Music School
Take-out	Slaughterhouse Bridge

Castle Creek provides an optional start to the Slaughterhouse section, although it can be more fun to set a double shuttle, switching from the creek boat to the freestyle boat at Slaughterhouse Bridge (the official Castle Creek take-out). The action is fairly continuous, but with a fair share of small and well-defined eddies offering a view of the riverside mansions that dot the riverbank. If you ever wanted to combine whitewater kayaking with a real estate tour of multi-million dollar homes, this would be the place. Any paddler involved in the real estate industry should put this on the must-do list.

Most of the run's difficulty comes from the blind corners, where a poorly placed log can wreak havoc. Fortunately, the annual wood usually collects in places where you can navigate around it, or do a quick and discrete portage across a million-dollar lawn. It's never a bad idea to check with locals on the wood status, but in my experience there aren't that many kayaking locals. The river-wide dam drop should be boofed with speed to avoid the hole at the bottom, and the crux action will pick up below this point. Quick moves continue

Alex Henes ♦ typical streamside scenery of an atypical lawn

If you ever wanted to combine whitewater kayaking with a real estate tour of multi-million dollar homes, this would be the place. And the creeky whitewater is rich in its own way.



Jason Roberts Alex Henes briefly hidden from the lush lawns and immaculate homes, Castle Creek

until you cross under the Highway 82 bridge, at which point a more relaxed and wood-choked stream delivers paddlers to the take-out.

Stick to the Aspen Music School put-in. The action above isn't as good due to more dams, although the even bigger mansions and posh million-dollar landscaping can be neat. As with most runs, the action here intensifies with muddy water, and offers a beginner-creeking feel at low flow.

Directions: Exit Hwy 82 at the roundabout on the west side of town, and drive south on Castle Creek Road for one mile, turning left onto the Music School Road. Turn left into the first parking lot and put in here. The take-out is the same as the Slaughterhouse put-in, found by driving North on Cemetery Lane from Hwy 82, over the speed bumps, down the hill, and to the Slaughterhouse bridge where there is a small park, and what I think is supposed to be a small whitewater park.

Grottos Park and Huck (no beta box)

This is probably a better scenic attraction, or better yet, a cool swimming hole than a worthy park-and-huck for most. Carved granite creates a highly stacked V+ string of waterfalls. The crux is a 12' vert with a tiny LZ. I've always been overly cautious of this set, since my friend and creek mentor Barry Chamberlain broke his back here on the rock shelf—but that's not to say that clean lines haven't been had. Low flows are best, since a weird cauldron midway through gets pretty ugly at even medium levels. The bottom drop is the cleanest. Bring the camera and a sack lunch to maximize enjoyment.

Directions: From Aspen drive eight miles southeast on Hwy 82, past the Weller CG to the marked parking area. Hike upstream a ¼ mile to the falls on river left.

Alex Henes Jason Roberts Castle Creek

Babes on Bailey

By Danielle Vogenbeck

We think we know what this region is missing—some recognition for the hardcore ladies out there kicking butt on the river. So here goes. I'm sorry to say that we have to do this under code names, otherwise we know we'd be hounded down every run we do by the fellas out there hoping to score with the hottest boater chicks in Colorado.

This is the story of our crew dialing Bailey—one first timer, Demolicious, one second timer, Fashionista, and one zillionth timer, Miss-Ti. She's our lead and you couldn't find a more solid ponytail to paddle behind! First, and most importantly, what were we wearing... That's right we looked good, as any boating betty should. Miss-Ti was styling in purple, white, and black and couldn't have looked sleeker bombing the rapids. Fashionista, our pride and joy when it comes to stylish river wear, was sporting her multi-blue/citrus outfit to match her Perception Java, and Demolicious rode the river in a festive red and green combo—the new Rockstar helmet had to stay in the car, lest it get scratched. Our hair looked good, our fashion sense was right on, so we wasted no time paddling our way to the first rapid.

We have to stop here to mention that, of course two boys spotted us in the parking lot at the take-out and begged to come along. After a few put-downs on our part like, "leave it to the fellas to ruin a good girl's day out..." we let them jump into our shuttle rig. Those guys tagged along the whole way down the river just hoping that one of us would become distressed, so they could perform their manly duties by pulling us out of the river. NO SUCH LUCK! A couple of times, we even had to show those dudes the lines and talk up the next stretch, just so they wouldn't whine and chicken out the whole way.

Back to the run... Miss-Ti, our fearless leader, took to Four Falls like she dances at the disco. She owned it! No problems, but Demolicious and Fashionista, who chose to portage the hardest stuff, did what all women boaters love best—whistled and cheered her on. Among yells of "you go girl" and "look out for the fellas on your way down" —Miss-Ti put on a huge smile, and charged it. All was smooth until Demolicious decided that a couple of rocks below Four Falls were ruining the Feng-Shui of the river and decided to move them with her head. Just as the guys were getting all excited that they might get to rescue her, she rolled up, smiled, and knew her work was done.

Supermax was giving us the finger, so we all chose to portage. We promised each other the next time that we'd put it in its place. Here comes the best part. After giggling and chit-chatting our way through the boogie water below Supermax, Miss-Ti once again showed the two boys (still breathing hard and trying to get it together after the last section) how to run a rapid the right way. She entered Deer Creek with a gigantic grin (maybe even giving the rapid the finger this time? I can't remember) and shot through the top slot, hit the biggest boof on river left of the day and sailed over the last drop clean as a whistle. Fashionista almost had a fit at the end of the rapid though—Miss-Ti's hair was all over the place. We were embarrassed that she could run a rapid so clean, but care less about her style! Fashionista wasted no time pulling her brush out of her dry bag and getting Miss-Ti back together. We high-fived and scurried our way through the rest of the run. It was getting late and we didn't want to miss the beers and food waiting for us at the little corner restaurant in Bailey.

We'll be making our way down this run many more times, and we are planning how we could get on Gore without being bombarded by dudes everywhere. So look out Dr. Aqua!

The girls are here, and our posse will only let you paddle with us if you look good—and we don't have to drag your butt out of the river every time you flip on an eddy line!

And as usual, other ladies are always welcomed... Girls Rock!

Slaughterhouse

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	450	800	1500	2500
Character	lots of rocks	play comes in	all-around IV	continuous
Class	IV	IV	IV+	V-
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	80 fpm			
Remoteness	trail side and nearly roadside			
Hitchability	okay, good with other boaters			
Length	4.5 miles			
Season	May, June, July			
Gauge	Roaring Fork @ Maroon Creek			
Put-in	Slaughterhouse Bridge			
Take-out	Upper Woody Creek Bridge			

This is the sister run to the Numbers—a scenic and easily accessible class IV at the edge of downtown Aspen. Unfortunately, the siblings have been fighting over the water on this river, and the Arkansas won with diversions draining the Roaring Fork headwaters to feed the ever-growing metropolis on the Front Range. Kayakers still see the water, but sadly it isn't in the Slaughterhouse section for more than about a month each year.

I actually prefer the Slaughterhouse run over the Numbers, and perhaps more than any other class IV run in Colorado. The smooth and rounded boulders that control the flow create a maze of rapids that are slightly more difficult and more channelized than anything on the Ark, making it more exciting for advanced paddlers, but not overly difficult for intermediates, since a clean line always exists. One thing for sure—the freestyle features are much better, with splat, cartwheel, loop, front surfing and spin spots throughout the 4.5-mile run.

Jason Roberts Alex Henes Slaughterhouse Falls

I bring the playboat, and most paddlers should, since the river only gets slightly tougher than the inbetween class IV twice. The first is marked by a noticeable pool and steep wall on river left, requiring a scout on river right. This is Slaughterhouse Falls, a short bedrock ledge uncharacteristic of the rest of the run that requires a left-side boof at low flow, and a far-right line under the branches at higher flow to avoid the ever-present hole. It's an easy portage, which I would rather perform as a trade off for bringing the playboat, although running it is straightforward.

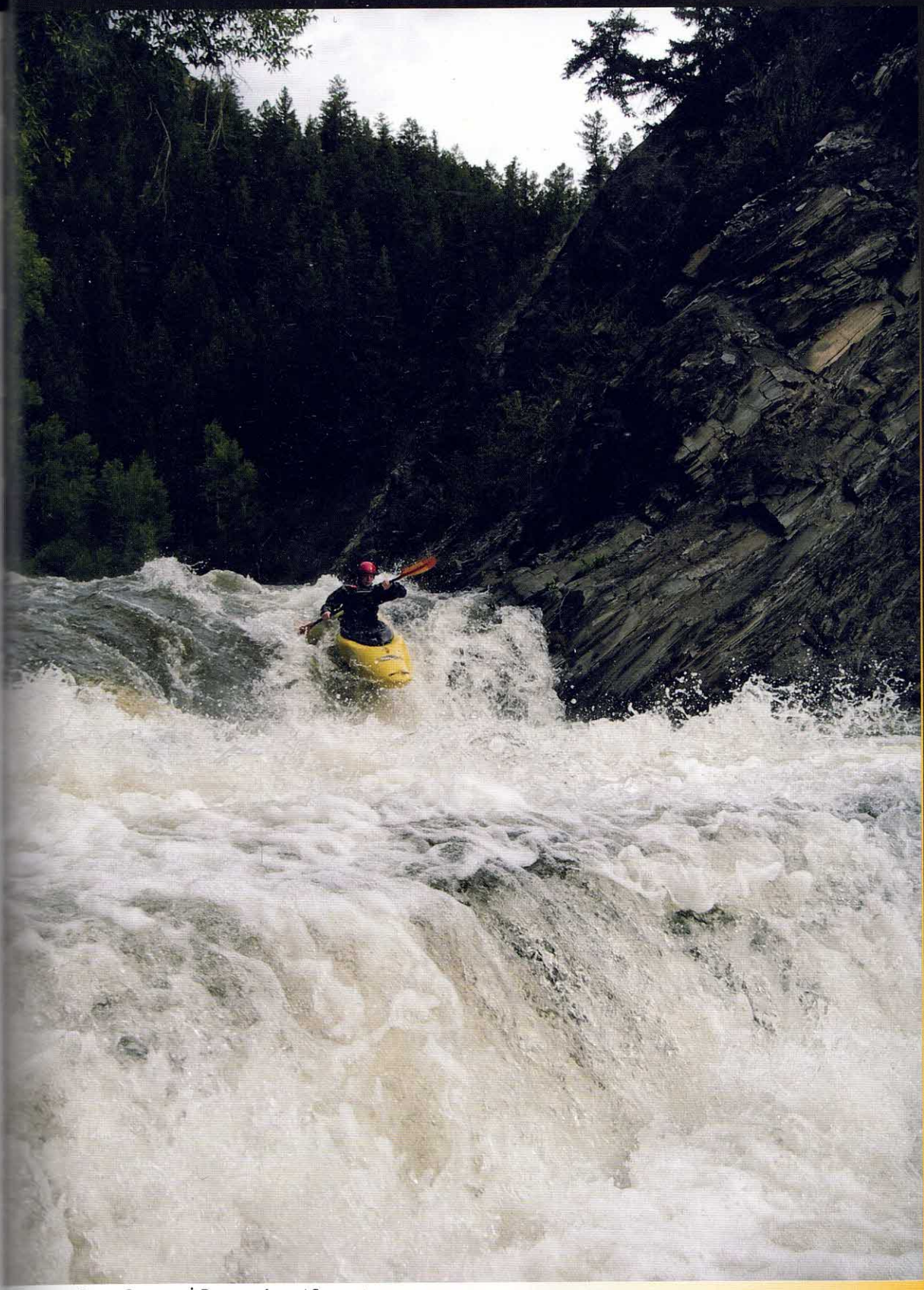
About 1/3 of the way down the run is a treatment plant on river left and a calmer stretch of river with some good play features, before the whitewater picks up again at S-turn, the longest rapid of the run. Triple Drop is next, and the second rapid of note in the run, since it contains a wide and somewhat sticky hole at the bottom. End center left to miss the hole. The best wave, Hawaii-Five-O comes towards the very end of the run, and is easily recognizable from the glassy trough over the shallow and smooth bedrock.

At higher flows, which become more and more rare as Colorado's population grows, Slaughterhouse's whitewater gets the volume turned up. Large holes, fast, cold, and continuous whitewater are the norm, and a few rapids can really stomp a paddler, including the nearly non-existent rapid at low water, Entrance Exam.

Directions

Drive north on Cemetery Lane from Hwy 82, over the speed bumps, down the hill, and to the Slaughterhouse bridge where there is a small park, and what I think is supposed to be a small whitewater park. This is the put-in. Continue north on Cemetery Lane until you reach the next bridge, just off of the Woody Creek Canyon Exit off of Hwy 82. A large dirt parking area is here on river right, and the best take-out.

The smooth and rounded boulders that control the flow create a maze of rapids that are slightly more difficult and more channelized than anything on the Ark.



David Goforth Benjamin Luck Slaughterhouse afternoon cruise

Woody Creek & Toothache

Paralleling Hwy 82 to the west of Aspen, the Roaring Fork River flows through gentle curves and mellow wave trains. It's here that beginner and intermediate paddlers can enjoy the refreshingly cold waters that flow off of the north face of the Maroon Bells, which tower over the lower Roaring Fork Valley. Upper Woody Creek and Lower Woody Creek/Toothache, are the two best sections for novice Aspenites and ski bums. Multiple combinations of runs and lengths are possible before the Colorado River confluence.

Upper Woody Creek

Resting directly below Slaughterhouse, the less than four-mile long run is the easiest section and therefore the best place for a beginner to start. Beginners will find the Roaring Fork to be continuous and cold. Be sure to dress well, and hit it with lower flows to have the most well-defined eddies. Experienced intermediates will enjoy an afterwork paddle on this run when they aren't feeling up to the tougher Slaughterhouse section, since there is only one rapid. Local rafters use this as the put-in for a longer run, but pre-scout the Hwy 82 bridge near the take-out for Lower Woody.

Directions: Use the Slaughterhouse take-out off of the Woody Creek Canyon Turnoff (mm 34.5) from Hwy 82. The Lower Woody Creek Bridge near mm 31 is the take-out. Use 17 Rd to avoid rush hour traffic.

CFS	500<min<1500<best
Class	III<2000<IV-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	60 fpm
Length	3.8 miles
Season	May, June, July
Gauge	RF @ Maroon Crk
Put-in	Upper Woody Crk
Take-out	Lower Woody Crk

Lower Woody Creek

The Lower Woody is slightly more continuous and has smaller eddies, a real bummer in the event of a swim. But it does feature a few sections where the river splits, forming mellower class II channels as a breather. One major obstacle here, found just below the somewhat forced take-out—an ugly CDOT bridge with narrow and diagonally placed bridge pilings. It's been the cause for seemingly annual rescues. Kayakers generally won't have a problem, but the abutments can trip up less experienced rafters.

Directions: The put in is at the Lower Woody Creek Bridge, mm 31 off of Hwy 82. The safest take-out is at the 16 Rd bridge off of Hwy 82 at Old Snowmass town, near mm 27.5.

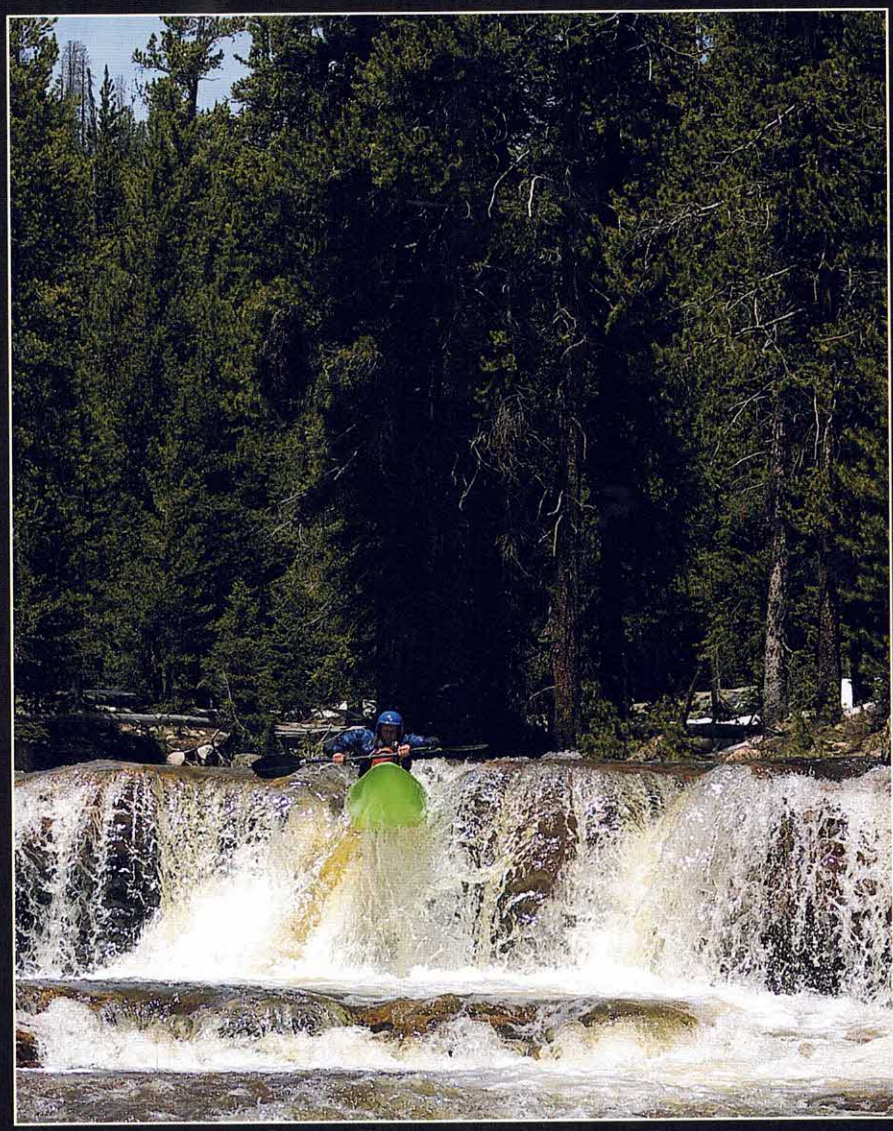
CFS	500<min<1500<best
Class	III<1700<IV-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	60 fpm
Length	3.5 miles
Season	May, June, July
Gauge	RF @ Maroon Crk
Put-in	Lower Woody Crk
Take-out	16 Rd bridge

Toothache Rapid (no beta box)

Toothache contains the toughest intermediate rapids (IV-), and is conveniently the last of the beginner sections. Irrigation weirs and fishing pools create a handful of play features if you continue to the FedEx take-out in Basalt (aka the FedEx Run). Look for levels over 500 on the Maroon Creek gauge. The run's namesake rapid is at mm 27.5. It's an easy roadside scout from the westbound lanes of Hwy 82.

Directions: The direct put-in is at mm 27.5. The best take-out is mm 25, near where a Hwy 82 bridge crosses the river.

Neil Beidleman ♦Roaring Fork Valley mountains



"What is harder than rock, or softer than water? Yet soft water hollows out hard rock. Persevere."

-Ovid

Fryingpan River

Bearing all of the scenic beauty and none of the social pageantry, the Fryingpan Valley contains a small sister river of the Roaring Fork northeast of Aspen. Bebopping through classic Colorado boulder-bed rapids in a spruce-fir forest, paddlers will be hard pressed to remember that they are roadside. There are some fun camping options to be had in this scenic valley, and not too far upstream the roads fade to trails, zig-zagging up the jagged peaks along the Continental Divide.

North Fork Fryingpan (no beta box)

If it is at peak run-off, or if heavy rain has fallen recently, the NF Fryingpan may offer one mile of class V steep-creeking in a shallow fairy-tale gorge. Not far upstream of the Fryingpan confluence, scout the entire gorged section as wood collects in scary places and tends to make up the crux of the run. Be on your game to catch an essential must-make eddy above a gorge-wide strainer. Maybe a local will clean it out before your next descent, but the pre-scout is highly recommended.

Directions: From Basalt take FR 105 east to the North Fork turnoff, along FR 501.

Upper Fryingpan

This is an excellent intermediate creek run with all of the major hazards I associate with tight Colorado creeking. A small weir, wood and the possibility of more wood await you, but the steep and technical rapids are made up of mostly non-threatening rounded natural river boulders. Once the rapids start, they are consistently steep but manageable and can be read-and-run by experts. They are still entertaining enough that intermediate parties may want to scout a few of the juicier sections, especially at higher flows. A competent leader who can boat scout well is beneficial. The top half of the run, above the Fryingpan road crossing, is a notch harder and contains most of the quality drops, but continuing on, especially at higher flows rewards paddlers with a few more chances to blast through a breaking wave or plug through a fluffy hole. This run is great when flowing strong, but that requires a big winter and full reservoirs on both sides of the divide. Much of the water is diverted to the west slope courtesy of the Hunter-Fryingpan project.

CFS	300<min<600<best
Class	IV+ (V-)<600<V-
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	125 fpm
Length	5.7 miles
Season	June, July, peak
Gauge	Fry-pan nr Thomasville
Put-in	Norrie Colony
Take-out	FR 400 or Ruedi Res

Directions: The put-in for the upper run is the parking area and footbridge at Norrie Colony (FR 504) off of FR 105 east of Basalt, a couple miles upstream of the turn off for the North Fork. The take-out is back down FR 105, at the second bridge crossing just above the reservoir.

Lower Fryingpan

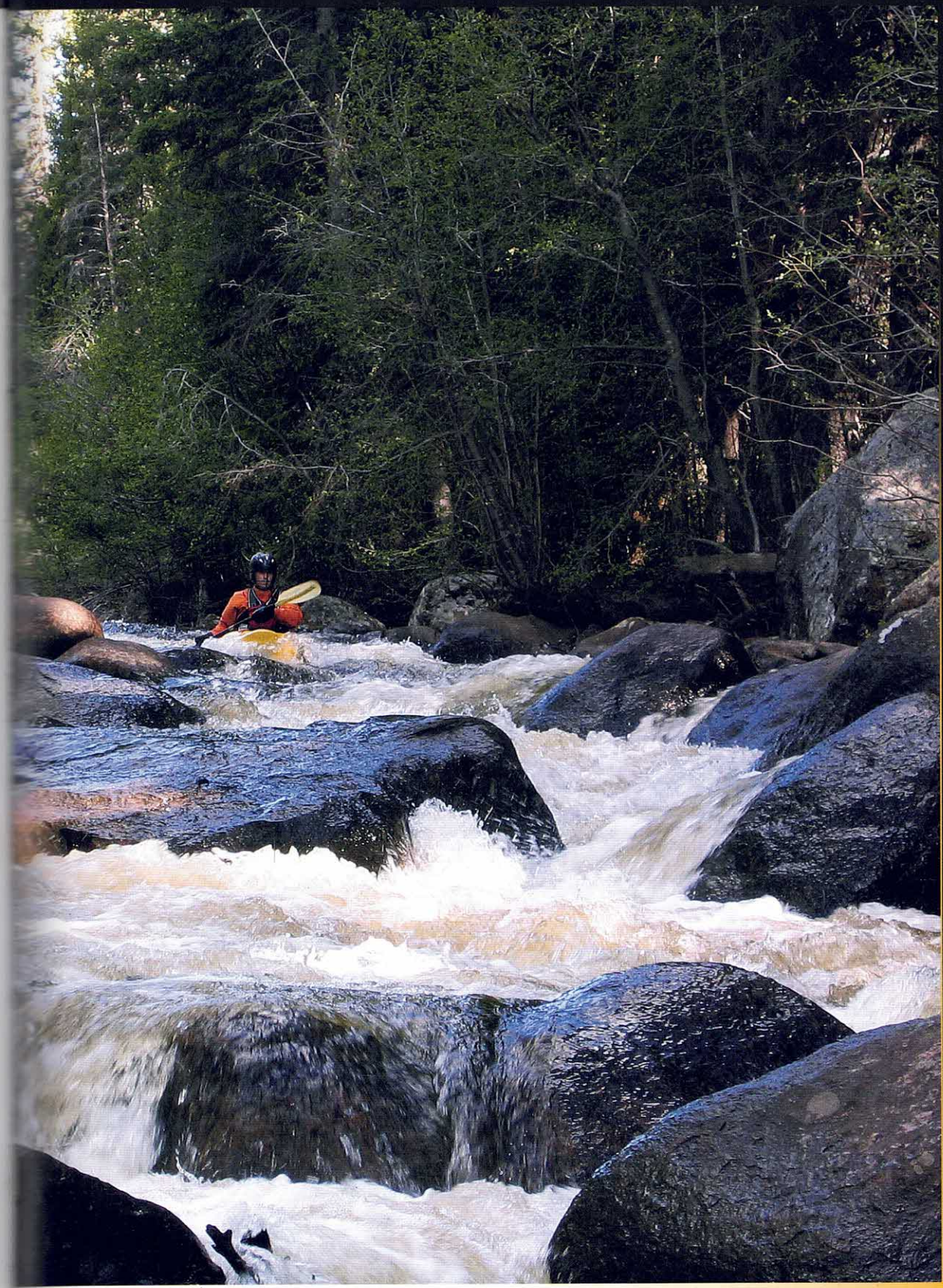
Below Reudi Reservoir the Fryingpan is more trout stream than kayak run, especially since a freshwater shrimp species breeding in the reservoir flushes downstream allowing the trout to gorge themselves and become MTOUS (mountain trout of unusual size). There are a couple of class IVish rapids a few miles above Basalt, but there aren't enough to create an action-packed section. The rest of the lower river provides a suitable beginner run, as long as someone in the group can identify strainers from upstream. The Lower's flow is choked by Reudi Reservoir, and to run, requires an even bigger snowpack than is needed for the Upper. Kayak Apres pizza and beer awaits in Basalt.

CFS	300<min<800<best
Class	IV-<1000<IV
Quality	★★★
Gradient	80 fpm
Length	4.4 miles
Season	dam controlled, short
Gauge	Fry-pan nr Ruedi
Put-in	FR 105
Take-out	Basalt

Directions: FR 105 is roadside to the lower stretch and has multiple access points east of Basalt, the lowest of which is in town.

Alex Henes Jason Roberts Thomasville Lime Kilns, used to make powdered Lime from 1889 to 1908

Bearing all of the scenic beauty and none of the social pageantry, the Fryingpan valley contains a small sister river of the Roaring Fork, just to the northeast of Aspen.



Jason Roberts Alex Henes the boulder style jumble of the Upper

The Fryingpan's Lime Creek

A tale into the unknown

by Chad Dyson

It was only a few days before the Memorial Day weekend and paddling plans had still not been set. A few last minute ideas were tossed around, but it was the descent of Lime Creek Canyon that stood out as the most intriguing way to unofficially kickoff the summer. Even though none of us had ever set eyes on the canyon, the topo's showed promise and soon enough it was game time.

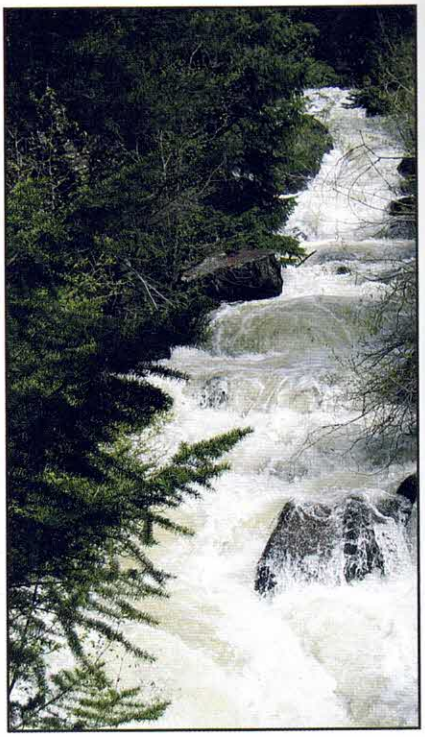
We had a small team of three paddlers (Steve, Ian, and myself) and Sari (Ian's wife) who was going to hike the entire stretch to provide downstream recon, additional safety, and overall team support. The intent was to get an early start on Saturday and with Sari's recon push as far down the canyon as possible before dark, with a strong chance of completing the section in one day. We had picked out a couple of escape routes in case things took a turn for the worse but we all had expectations to finish by that evening. After all it was only four miles long, right?

In the typical fashion of the wannabe early start, we didn't put on until 1:00 in the afternoon. Right from the beginning we knew we were in for a long day and then some, because immediately below the put-in the willows became fierce, in some cases creating a tunnel completely covering the small creek bed. With almost no eddies to catch in case of river-wide strainers, we began the scout-hike-boat process in which we would literally scout to the next take-out/portage, hike back up to the boats, and then paddle down to the predetermined take-out/portage. A lot of we left one person downstream to grab the nose of our boats due to the lack of a place to exit. This quickly became the method of choice and the only way we could safely continue the entire run.

Eventually the creek gained more water and widened enough to tame the willows. Even though the corners were blind and you could see only short distances at a time, the creek was still very tame early on. All of us were expecting more gradient early on and we began to ponder how steep the crux might really be. Although the process was slow, we continued to pick away at the creek section by section with an occasional portage due to wood, but we still had not come across a major rapid.

Finally we came across the first significant drop of the run. It was over 200 yards long but fairly straight forward minus one fan rock at the midpoint. All of us fired up the drop without incident. After a short

CFS	150<best
Class	V- (NR, Ps)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	240 fpm
Length	4.5 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	FR 506
Take-out	FR 400



Chad Dyson ♦ scenery and action (all)

bit of rejoicing from paddling an actual rapid and being free from the willows, the drop was appropriately dubbed Free Willow and the mission continued.

Not much further downstream, we came across Lime Juice, a 5' ledge drop with a simple lead-in and run-out. The only trick here was a last minute shallow boof stroke in order to avoid being shoved into the right hand wall. Everyone had decent lines and it was a good drop, but we only had a couple of daylight hours left and the GPS showed that we weren't even half way through the run. We still didn't know what the crux looked like, or if we could even portage it for that matter. Although spirits were still high, everyone knew at this point we probably weren't going to make the take-out by evening.

After a quick consensus, we decided to continue to push downstream until about a ½ hour before dusk and then ditch our gear and hike either down the banks or up one of the few draws to the road Even though the willows were a pain in the ass they were relatively free of wood, but now we had entered a tall forest section and wood became an issue. Self-catchable eddies were still hard to find and the corners were still blind. Below Lime Juice we continued the scout-hike-boat practice over a few runnable sections and portages, more often than not leaving a boat catcher in the eddy directly above a river-wide strainer.

The creek began to pick up more gradient and also more wood, with the sun was setting quickly. It was obvious we were getting closer to the crux of the run due to the consistent increase in gradient and the narrowing of the canyon. We continued the push but the wood portages became closer and closer together until we came to the first unrunnable drop, a 20' high sieve/falls combination of truck size boulders. There was no line to be had here except hard right on the dry shore.

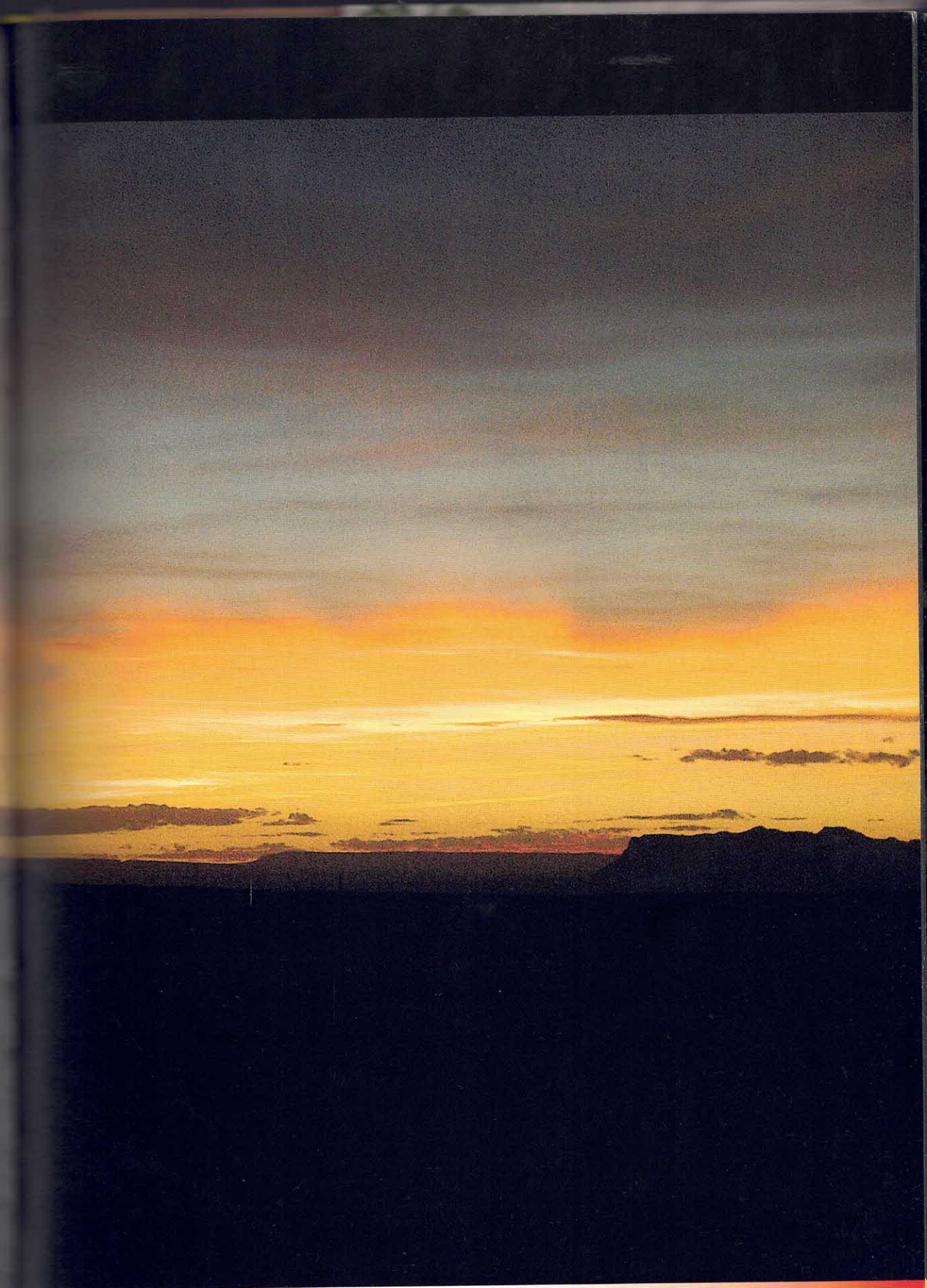
Immediately below the sieve/falls the creek took on another character, and not exactly the character we were hoping for either. We had found the crux that we had been pondering earlier. The rapid was full steam ahead for over 300 yards and extremely steep with slides, falls, ledges, and boulder gardens, not to mention ending in multiple river-wide strainers. Individually, each drop could have been managed if it stood alone, but with all the drops linked together and no chance of recovery or catching an eddy, there was no way we could safely paddle the rapid with only the four of us, let alone try to exit prior to the strainers. So with little hesitation the exhausting portage began. It was brutally off camber and went over large boulders and down steep slopes with one boat almost ghost riding into the crux. It took about 30 minutes to make our way to the bottom of the drop and by then the sun had almost completely set. We ditched our boats and gear, grabbed a quick bite, marked the way point, and then began bushwhacking downstream to the take-out where we had left the shuttle that morning anticipating a shorter day. Unfortunately, the bushwhack seemed about as forgiving as the crux was but the warm dry clothes at the shuttle kept us moving forward and we arrived at the truck 9 hours after we began the day.

The next morning came fast and no one was really psyched to go back in again. I remember offering $300 for someone to go in and get my boat. I was quickly counter-offered $350 to retrieve theirs. The whole group seemed to move in a procrastinating manner while cooking breakfast and taking in the morning sun. Obviously we hadn't learned the lesson of the late start the day before and once again didn't get on the creek until noon or so.

It took us about 45 minutes of bushwhacking to make our way back down to the boats and gear. After suiting up, we immediately kicked off day two with some wood portaging and paddled a few less intense rapids before coming to what would be the last major rapid in the run. Steve was the only motivated paddler on day two and fired up the long boulder garden rapid without a hitch. After a few more portages due to wood, the river began to flatten and widen. Before we knew it we were once again fighting the willows, only this time the willows won. The path of least resistance was unrecognizable through the willow patch from hell due to the multiple forks and we ended up wading chest deep in water and willows pushing our boats jungle-style down one of the forks. Needless to say, this portage ranked pretty high on the list and for the first time in two days had us laughing at the whole situation.

After all the forks rejoined, the willows finally eased again and the creek remained almost carefree with only a handful of blind corners. After spending over 13 hours in two days we arrived at the take-out, surviving Lime Creek Canyon without loss of blood, broken boats, lost gear, pins, swims, or any major incidents and deemed it a success with many rounds of High Life and a massive amount of food.

San Rafael Swell

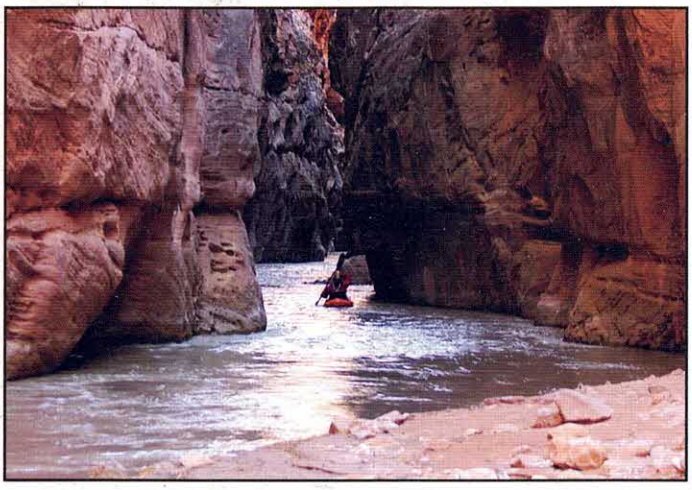


Muddy Creek Chute

This is the quintessential beginner slot canyon run. One must merely navigate class II ripples to enjoy this magical gorged world of extremely narrow passageways and 300' cliffs of natural art panels. The water is warm if you can catch it and the respite from the desert sun in the dark shadows of the Chute will have you longing for more time in this special place. If the sky is clear of rain clouds, then spending a night in this canyon would be special—so don't be afraid to bring the inflatable and a non-kayaking spouse or friend.

The area surrounding Muddy Creek is steeped in Wild West history with a gunslinger's hideout and a section of the Old Spanish Trail nearby. Tales of Spanish Gold that was mined by enslaved Native Americans, then stolen during uprisings and subsequently hidden in the San Rafael Swell has inspired generations of treasure hunters. More recent history in the area shows the signs of the uranium mining boom during the post World War II era, with large mines near both the put-in and take-out. Fragments of ancient history also remain with a wide array of picto and petroglyphs, pottery shards and arrowheads strewn throughout the landscape.

If the water is flowing, the Muddy Creek Chute is worthwhile in a small watercraft, and even when the creek is dry this would be a beautiful and worthy canyon hike. Some flow (but how much is the question) is diverted above this run but below the gauge. Timing a descent can be tricky. Save this one for when there is ample flow in a big Utah snow year.



CFS	120<min<200<best
Class	II+
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	20 fpm
Length	15 miles or more
Season	peak
Gauge	Muddy Crk nr Emery
Put-in	Tomsich Butte
Take-out	Hidden Splendor Mine

There are 72 miles of paddling possibilities surrounding this 15-mile day stretch. The Chute provides the best slot canyon scenery, and better current than most of the other reaches. I'd stick to paddling The Chute in one or two short days, and then add in a hike in the nearby slot canyons of Little Wild Horse and Bell for more time in the Swell.

Directions: From I-70 west of Green River take Exit 131 (Exit 129 in the Gazeteer) then drive south on Rd 332 following signs to McKay Flat and what becomes Rd 1012. Turn right onto Rd 1019 (the south side of the Red Canyon Loop Rd) and follow the signs to Tomsich Butte/Hondoo Arch. Put in where the road meets the river. To get to the take-out, drive back out to Rd 1012 (Temple Jct to Hidden Splendor Rd) and turn south. The road will dead end at the Hidden Splendor Mine where the take-out trail leads to the river below. The shuttle is remote, time consuming, dusty and hot. Other put-in and take-out options exist, but none are as convenient for the day trip. Gas is available in Green River and Hanksville, so fill up prior to arrival.

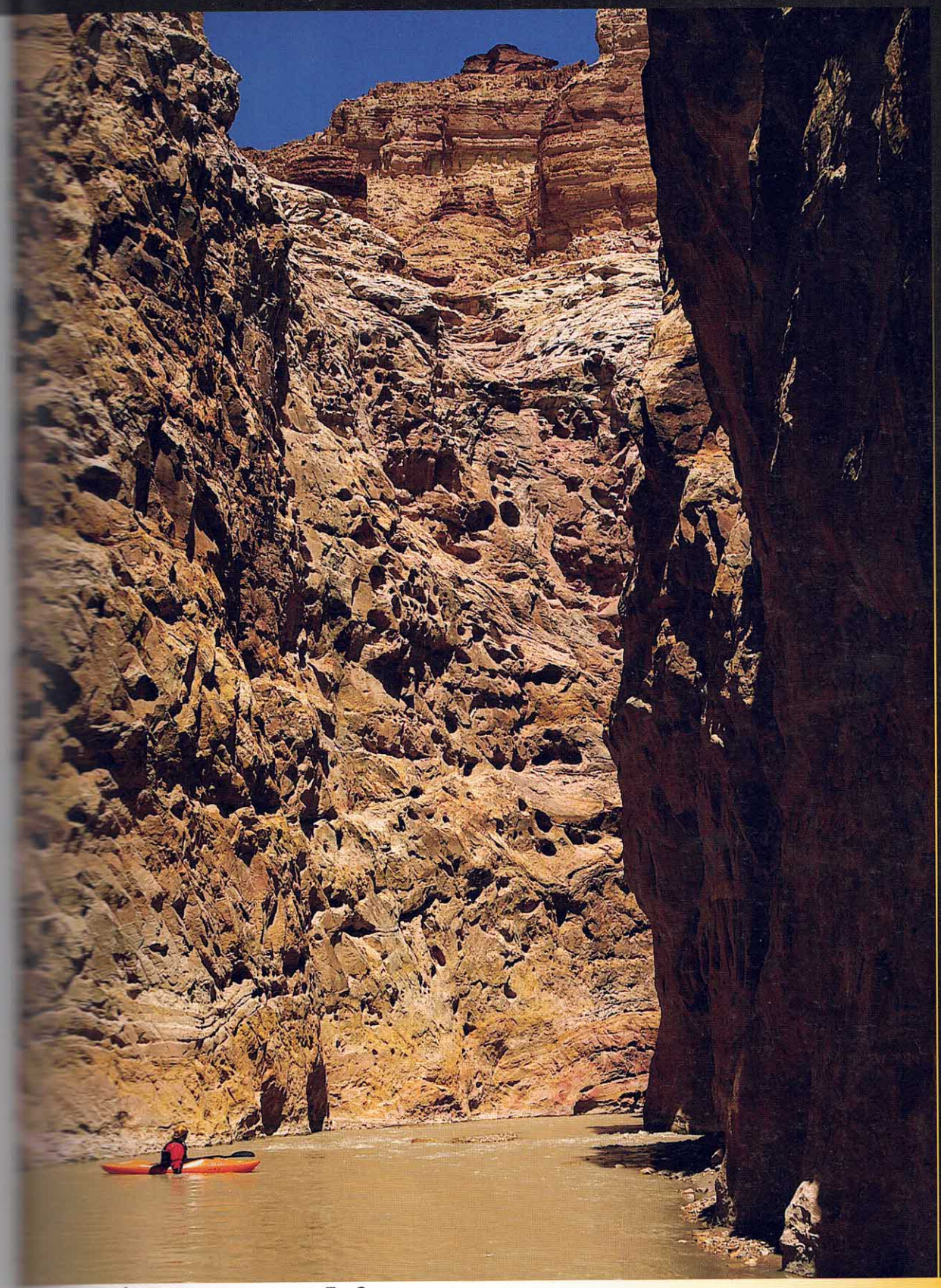
Fremont River

Look for a banner snow year to catch adequate flows on the Fremont. The best action comes in a nine-mile stretch downstream of Torrey, ending in Capital Reef National Park. Class II meandering and forks lead into the action that starts near the two-mile point. Expect to scout at least a half dozen times. A set of short verts (less than 15 feet) comprise the crux and are dubbed Hangover, Chunderbunny, and Fledgeling Falls. The canyon is very gorged in this section, but things never become unreasonably tight. Treat every descent as a first, and give yourself ample time to enjoy the deep and narrow slot canyon and the steep whitewater.

Directions: From Torrey, drive south on Hwy 12 and put in at the bridge. Take Hwy 24 east to the take-out at Capital Reef's Fruita CG.

CFS	160<min
Class	V (V+ x4)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	125 fpm
Length	9 miles
Season	early season peak
Gauge	Fremont Riv nr Bicknell
Put-in	Hwy 12 bridge
Take-out	Fruita CG

CLASS II RIPPLES CAN BE FOUND BETWEEN THE WALLS OF THIS MAGICAL SLOT CANYON IN THE HEART OF THE SWELL. BRING A NON-KAYAKING FRIEND AND COMBINE THE FLOAT WITH A SLOT CANYON HIKE.



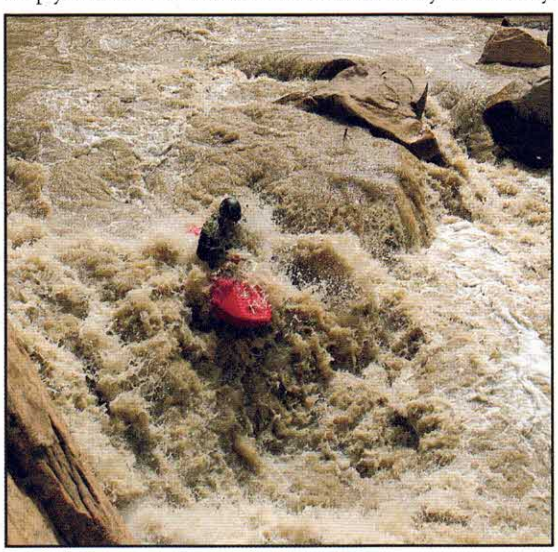
Black Boxes

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	400	500	800	1200
Character	keep your job	slow inbetween	pack and go	quit your job
Class	IV- (P x2)	IV (P x2)	IV (P, V)	IV+ (P, V)
Quality	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	40 fpm average, 80 fpm First Box, 105 fpm Second Box			
Remoteness	high—desolate desert awaits those that escape the walls			
Hitchability	very poor			
Length	41 miles (hike-in option cuts out 8 miles of flat)			
Season	pray for snow in UT...peak of a good season			
Gauge	San Rafael River near Green River			
Put-in	San Rafael Campground			
Take-out	end of road past Black Dragon Wash			

The desert areas of Utah are a spiritual place. The barren landscape gnaws at every footstep as you dodge some cacti with a left skip and attempt to prolong the inevitable chapping by licking your cracked lips. The warm muddy water that carves these sacred boxes does not last long in an average year, but to catch these indispensable waters is to experience a few fleeting moments of divine connection with the river via a paddle stroke. People of all kinds, from the Anasazi to the Mormons, have found solace in the dry washes and windgate sandstone cliff faces that are indigenous to the area. The San Rafael through the Black Boxes is the quintessential soul boaters run for those who've found kayaking to be their religion.

First Box

Class III be-bop through an open but spectacular canyon funnels you into the Black Box numero uno. A few minor class IV rapids, while the canyon is still relatively open, keep you entertained before the first and only mandatory portage on the run of a river-wide sieve. A quick portage of the sieve and a dicey-feeling seal slide leads to gradually narrowing walls, as the upper box starts to form. Two class IV rapids warm you up for the technical crux of the run as you enter a narrowing gorge. The thundering of the rapid below reverberates off the cliff walls as you approach the lip. The uninitiated spawn looks of deep concern as the walls close in and the rumbling reaches its deep pitched crescendo. A scout on the left will reveal either a sketchy rock pile that will likely be portaged or a Class V left to center move through the single desirable slot of three, depending on flows. This is Rock Fall, the only rapid on the run with major consequences. Even the seal launch portage can be exciting.



ES Chris Smith Submarine

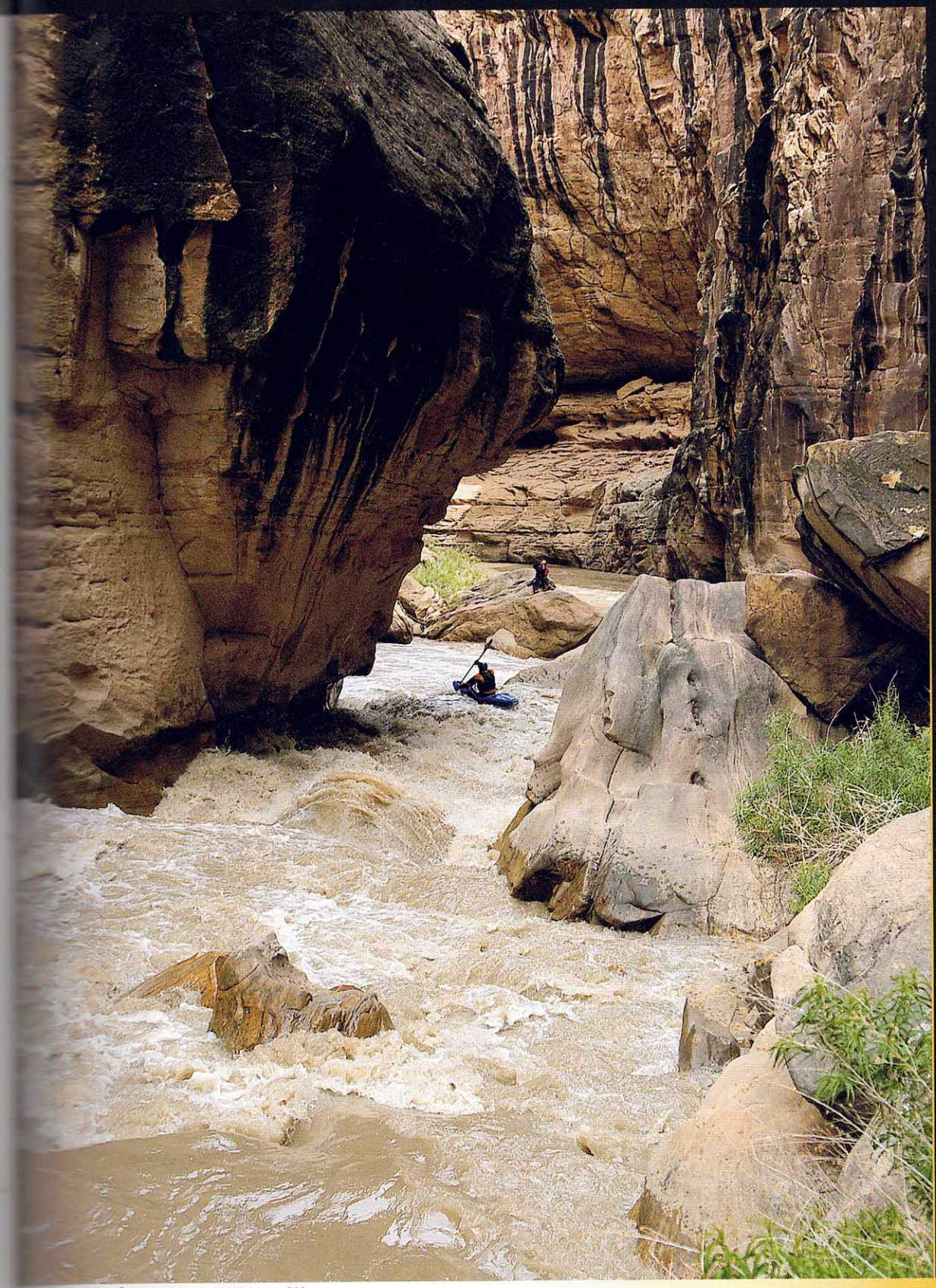
Once below the crux, the views looking back upstream are breathtaking and the intermediate paddler will feel relieved to know that only class IV whitewater remains. Too soon the first box ends, and a meandering four miles of flatwater deliver you around Mexican Mountain and into the second box. Spending a night on this run will prolong your immersion in this spiritual place and the best camping occurs on river right, directly above the second box.

Second Box

At the entrance to the Second Box lies the storied narrow walls of Swasey's Leap. Syd Swasey jumped a horse over the San Rafael, 50 feet above the water's surface to win a bet.

The second box is the more intimate of the two. The scouting options are more limited and one rapid must be run blind. The blind drop is most easily run by entering on the far left and then moving back into the center meat of the rapid. All of the other rapids in the second box can be scouted but most are read-and-runnable by the expert paddler. A confident probe will help. Many fun drops persist as you gaze up at the painted walls in the moving flats between them. As a unit, the rapids of the bottom box

THE WARM MUDDY WATER THAT CARVES THROUGH THESE SACRED BOXES DOES NOT LAST LONG, BUT TO CATCH THESE WATERS IS TO EXPERIENCE A FEW FLEETING MOMENTS OF DIVINE CONNECTION WITH THE RIVER.



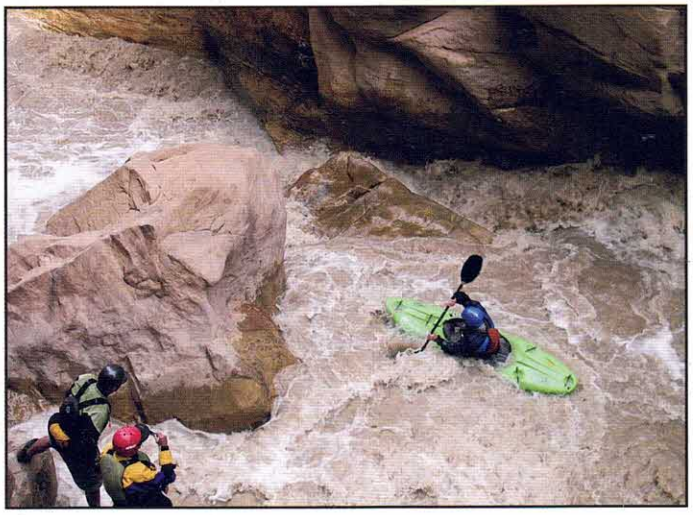
ES Sam Chesley ♦Weeping Wall rapid

offer up a very quality piece of pool drop whitewater.

Beyond the second box, a safety meeting of epic proportions is in order to help you and your team members enjoy the eight miles of magnificently scenic flatwater to the take-out. The take-out can be inconspicuous so be sure to mark it while running the shuttle. I recommend running the flatwater at dusk while the sun is setting. During our flatwater paddle out, the light went into a deep pink glow and its reflection off the water was nothing short of moving. This is one to put on the list and to go to when the water is high. When anywhere near central Utah in the spring, do make time for the Black Boxes.

Hike-in Instructions—One Day Mission

For those looking to make this run a one day affair, or for those who would rather hike a mile of rugged terrain than paddle eight miles of relatively flatwater, here is an alternate put-in option. Turn right onto a dirt road just past the San Rafael bridge and drive approximately 6-7 miles to the Lockhart Box trailhead. The trailhead, marked by a small cattle chute and some basic signage, is the only marked parking on this entire stretch of road (the end of this road is the trailhead for a one-mile hike that provides river access at the bottom of the first box). Begin by hiking down the wash. In about 1/3 of a mile veer left of the wash following the poorly delineated trail out onto the rim. The scattered geodes will force a smile despite the inhospitable heat. Pick your way along the rim of the wash until you reach the rim of the San Rafael River. Here a steep down climb on the ridge that forms near the confluence of the Lockheed Wash and the San Rafael is necessary to reach the canyon floor. Go for a quick swim to cool off and enjoy the whitewater that begins to form immediately downstream.



Directions

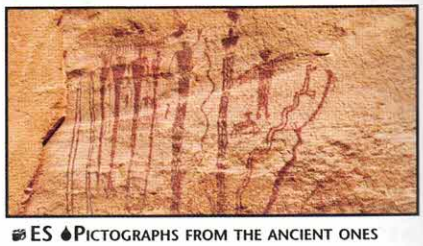
To reach the take-out make a right directly onto a dirt road off of west bound I-70 (no highway exit) less than a mile after crossing over the San Rafael bridge. Follow this dirt road, past the Black Dragon Wash, until it ends at a camp spot turn-around by the river. To get to the put-in, drive back to I-70 and head west to exit 131 (129 in Gazeteer). Turn North onto Rd 332, aka Buckhorn Draw Road, which leads to the put-in bridge at the San Rafael Campground.

Little Grand Canyon

At the very northern most point of the swell, three Wasatch Mountain streams join forces to form the San Rafael River. The river carves easily southeast through the great uplift, slicing a beautiful desert canyon between soaring buttes and towering spires. The clear mountain streams turn to a chocolate mud flow in one of the most scenic novice floats around. Fast current and sand riffles bank off the overhanging walls. Side canyons snake away in every direction creating great hiking and camping opportunities, especially for pictoglyph hunters. The entire run can be done in a day, but like the Black Boxes, immersing yourself by spending the night in these sacred lands of the ancient inhabitants of North America is always recommended.

Directions: The put-in is found by taking Hwy 10 north of Castle Dale. Head west at the Green River Cutoff (401 Rd) following signs to the Wedge Overlook. Take a right on 405 Rd and then immediately take another right onto an unmarked road down to Fuller Bottom. The take-out is found by continuing east on the Green River Cutoff, past Buckhorn Draw where an amazing panel of pictoglyphs rests and down to the bridge near the San Rafael CG.

CFS	200<min<400<best
Class	I+
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	10 fpm
Length	17 miles
Season	May, June (peak)
Gauge	San Rafael nr GR, UT
Put-in	Fuller Bottom
Take-out	San Rafael CG



KM ES ROCK FALL CENTER LINE, THE ONLY ROUTE THAT GOES

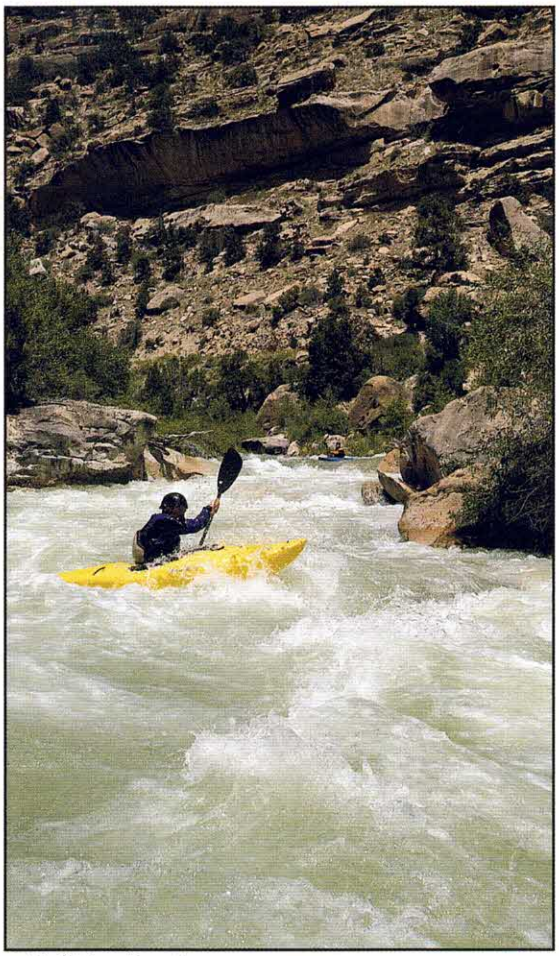
ES PICTOGRAPHS FROM THE ANCIENT ONES

ES KM Rock Fall, deep in box one

Straight Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	180	250	450	700
Character	utarded	worthy	play gets good	rejoice fellow rats
Class	III	III+	IV-	IV
Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	90 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good			
Length	8 miles			
Season	May, early June			
Gauge	www.ewcd.org for daily update of Joe's Valley			
Put-in	Joe's Valley Reservoir dam road			
Take-out	large pulloff before canyon tightens			

Joe's Valley, long recognized for its beautiful road and riverside Utah sandstone bouldering, also happens to be home to a classic little stretch of quality whitewater, arguably the best intermediate run in the state. Although adequate flows can be hard to come by on Cottonwood Creek (aka Straight Canyon), the mid-elevation desert canyon scenery and the crystal clear green water make even a low water descent worthwhile. When there are flows above 400 cfs expect a continuous ride through crisp class III and IV rapids with great eddy hopping and boat scouting potential. And yes, the water really is the color in the photo.



ES Zach Beck clean and crystal green

Play runs are common, as there are ample places to throw down, but don't be afraid to take the big boat. This run has a very fun and creeky feel with multiple pour-overs to boof and eddies to catch. It also collects wood and has other creek related hazards to be aware of. As of 2006 there was a river wide log near the top of the run that could be snuck on the very far river left, basically on the shore. Another option would be to put in right below this log, which is easily visible from the highway. The rest of the run was free from portages, but this could easily change with a big release from the reservoir upstream.

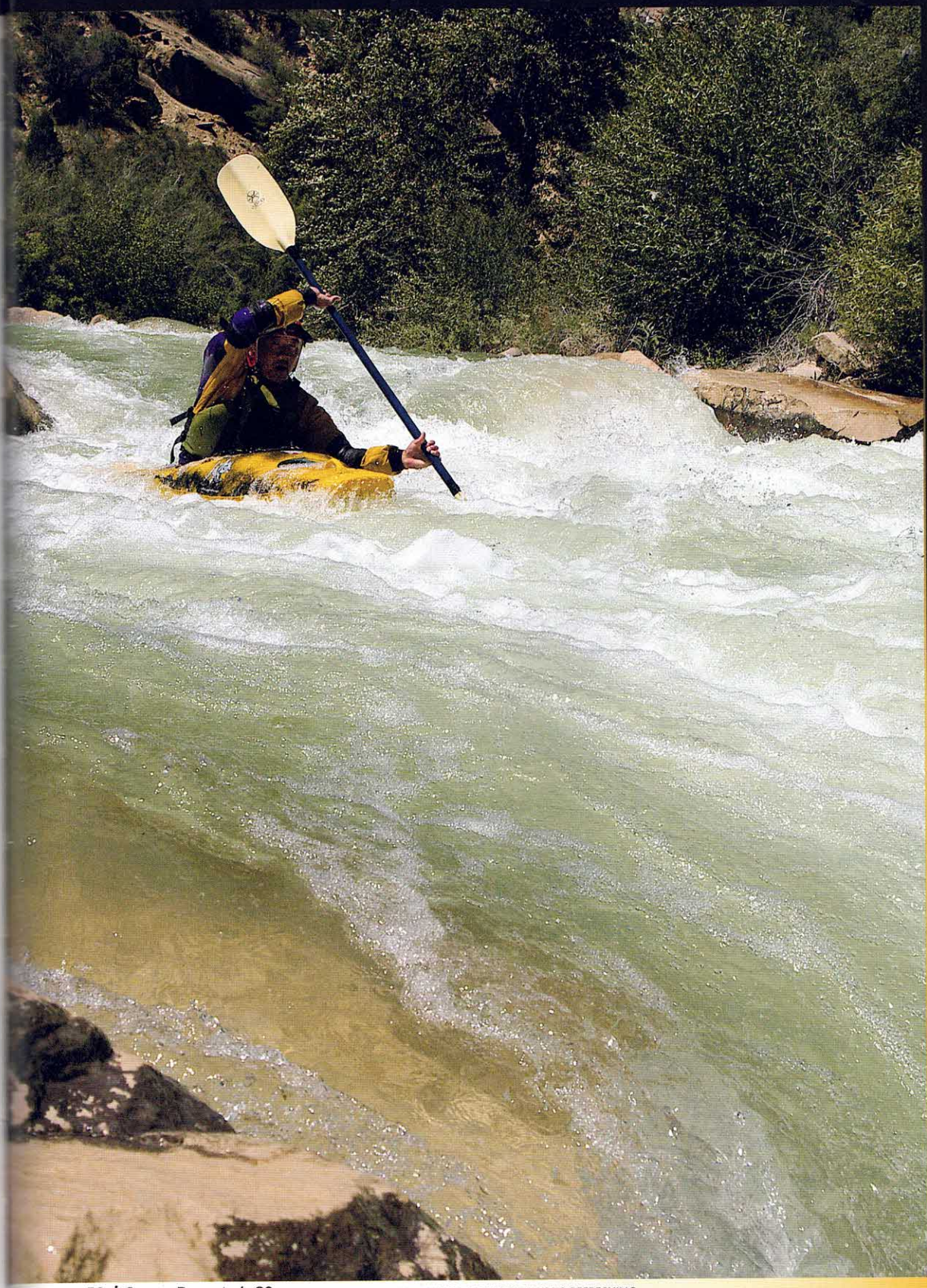
Numerous scouting, put-in and take-out options exist as Route 29 parallels the entire run. After spending a few days paddling in the muddy waters of the Utah desert, there is nothing quite like a morning run down some cold and clear water to clean the sand off the gear and out the ears. Cottonwood Creek Straight Canyon fits that bill to a tee.

Directions

From Hwy 10 take Route 29 towards Joe's Valley Reservoir. The most upstream put-in can be found by hiking down the dam road, or use a dirt pulloff before the road begins its climb to meet the top of the reservoir. Take out as far down as you think looks fun. A large pullout on the south side of the road offers a good rendezvous point before the canyon tightens. Regardless, the run is completely roadside.

San Rafael Swell • Straight Canyon

CLEAR EMERALD WHITEWATER COURSES THROUGH A BOULDER GARDEN MAZE OF BOOFS , HOLES, AND EDDIES CREATING AMAZINGLY DIVERSE LINES AND ARGUABLY THE BEST INTERMEDIATE RUN IN THE STATE.



ES STEINER BEPPU IT'S 90 DEGREES IN THE SHADE—NOW THE WATER LOOKS REFRESHING

Huntington Creek

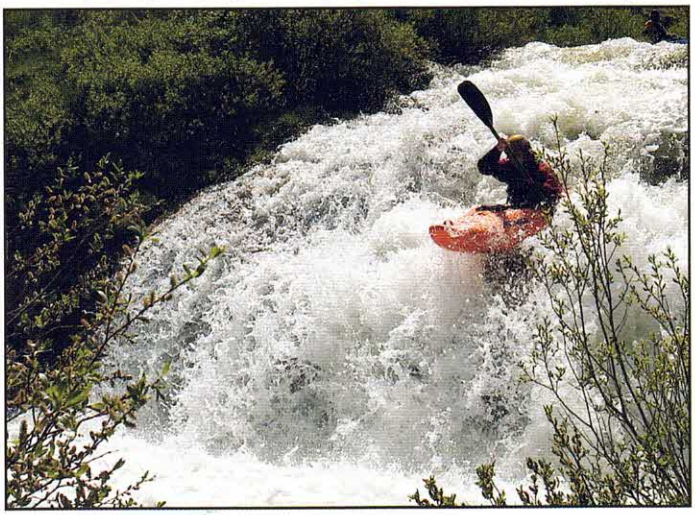
Left Fork Huntington

CFS	150<min<325<good
Class	IV-<325<V-
Quality	★★★★★ (high flow)
Gradient	135 fpm
Length	6.5 miles
Season	May, June (fall release)
Gauge	see text
Put-in	Miller Flat Res
Take-out	Forks Huntington CG

The Left Fork Huntington creek has a fantastic slate riverbed that contains numerous low angle slides, forming banking laterals and easily avoidable pocket holes, with an occasional short vert thrown in for fun. The paddling is non-technical, and although an overabundance of wood is present, it tends to collect in the pools between the drops.

The headwaters roll off the east side of the Wasatch Plateau a short distance from the put-in, and the cumulative outflows of Miller Flat, Huntington, Cleveland, and Rolfson Reservoirs contribute (for better or worse) to the water level of the run. A few different put-in options exist but the preferred choice is the Miller Flat outflow where paddlers must scrape down the micro creek for a 1/2 mile, but are rewarded with a 6' slide-to-vert drop directly above the confluence with, um, more water. More water is the outflow from the other three reservoirs, and where the outflows combine is an alternate put-in, but unlike Miller Flat Creek this option is longer and requires a mandatory portage.

The second drop of the run comes immediately after this confluence and is the only other notable vert of the run. The rest of the run contains a fun-filled blur of laterals, holes, waves and slides, slides and more slides. About a third of the way into the run the wood portaging begins and will progressively increase. Fortunately, the eddies were good above the wood and the portages quick and easy. If the run were ever strategically cleaned it might have only a few portages. By leaving a couple strainers to collect future trees, the run might remain relatively clean for a number of years since high flows are rare.



Gauge: In the spring check www.ewcd.org. Click Upper Huntington Teacups below Powerplant. In the fall add the reservoir outflows together to check for adequate flow.

Directions: Hwy 31 between Huntington and Fairview provides the bulk of the shuttle access. The take-out can be found at the well-marked Forks of Huntington CG, parking as close to the Left Fork Huntington Creek Trailhead as possible, and doing a very short hike up the trail to scout the take-out above the last logs in the flats. From here, turn left (north) on Hwy 31 and continue for approximately 13 miles to a left turn onto Miller Flat Road. Continue straight for 3 miles, and turn left onto the dirt road on the north side of Miller Flat Reservoir. Park wherever convenient, and hike down to the base of the reservoir to put in. The alternative put-ins are also accessible via Miller Flat Road.

Huntington Creek

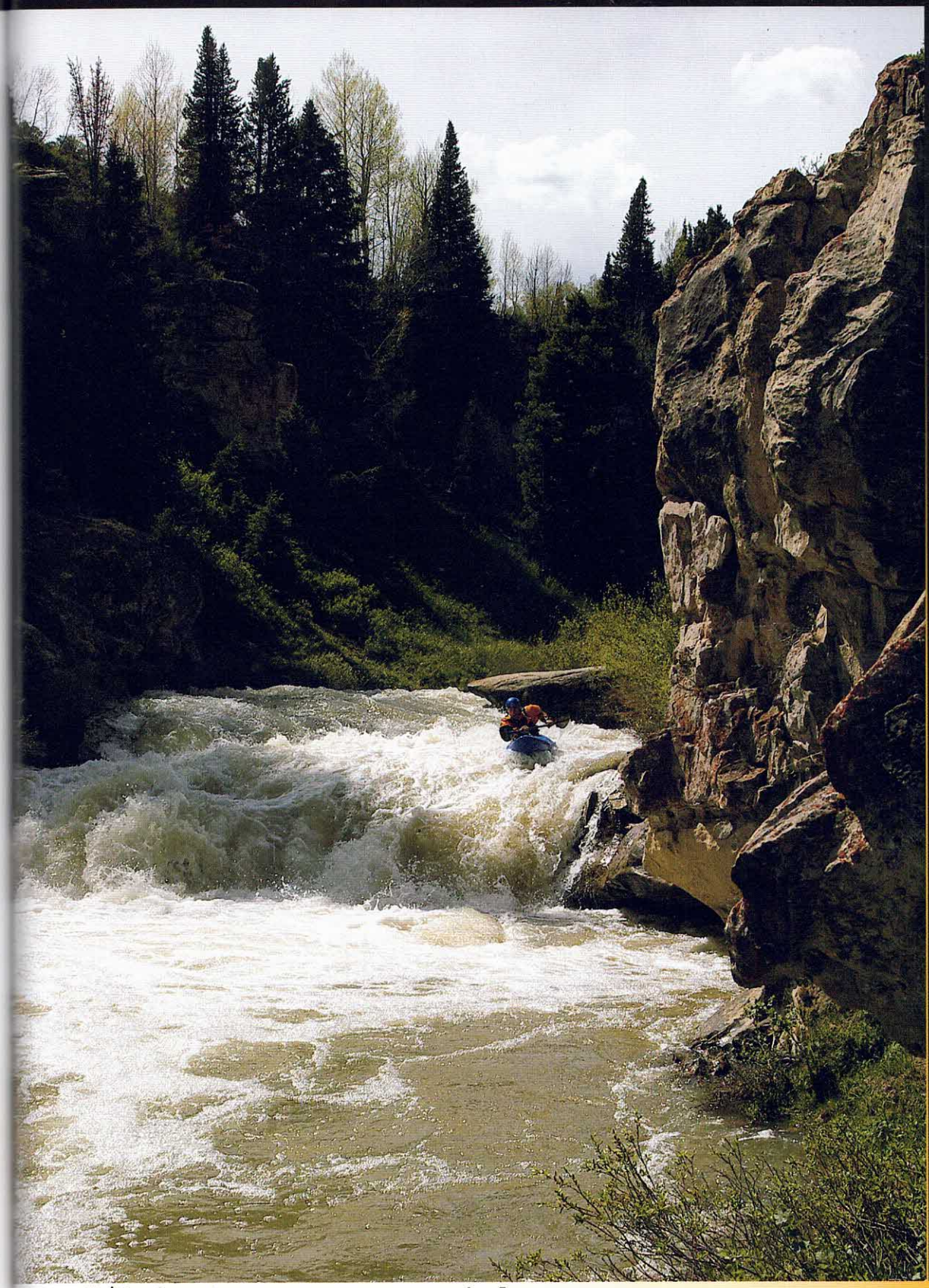
CFS	250<min<350<best
Class	III (IV-)<400<IV- (V-)
Quality	★★★
Gradient	110 fpm
Length	3 miles (variable)
Season	May, June
Gauge	same as Left Fork
Put-in	Forks Huntington CG
Take-out	Bear Creek CG

More water and an easier riverbed greet paddlers that run Huntington Creek from the Left Fork confluence down. The logistically easy roadside run begins at the Forks of the Huntington Campground and weaves its way down defined boulder garden drops for the next 15 miles. Multiple access points exist, especially in the top half of the run, making it possible to pre-scout nearly everything while running shuttle.

Expect a few portages and a few sneak lines around wood that piles up on the larger rocks, creating the greatest threat. The hardest whitewater approaches V- at high flow, and can be found in the bottom third of the run, just above the take-out at Bear Creek Campground.

Directions: From Huntinton drive northwest on Hwy 31. Take out at Bear Creek CG and put in at the Forks of the Huntington CG.

NON-TECHNICAL PADDLING OVER A SERIES OF SLATE BEDROCK SLIDES, COMPLETE WITH BANKING LATERALS, SMALL HOLES, AND AN OCCASIONAL BOOF TO STOMP. TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE? WOOD ISSUES.



ES SAM CHESLEY THE FIRST DROP BELOW THE CONFLUENCE, LEFT FORK

Virgin River

ES KM Zion Narrows

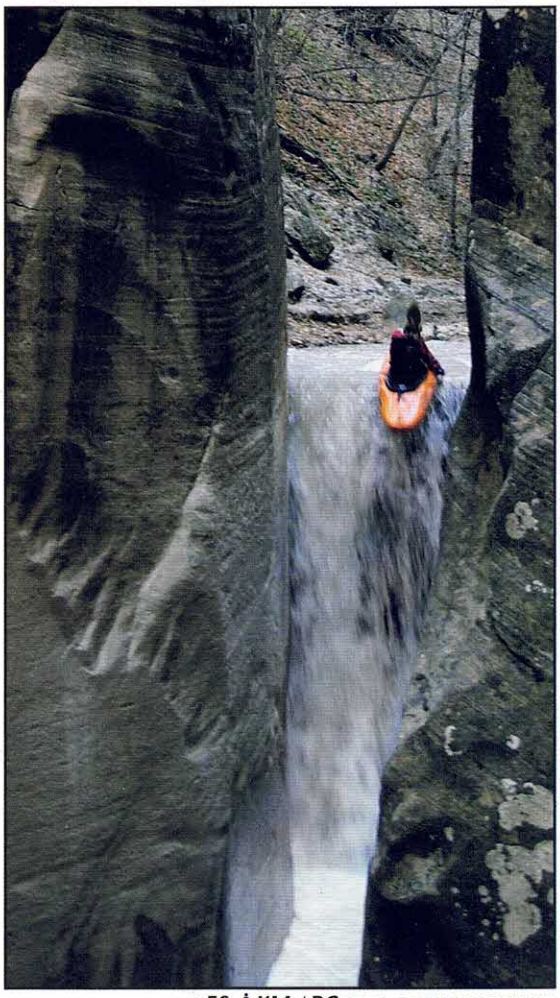
Zion Narrows

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	350	450	600	1400
Character	scrape to confluence	scrape less	almost exciting	hell yeah!
Class	III- (IV)	III (IV)	III+ (IV)	IV- (IV+)
Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	30 fpm			
Remoteness	one way out, and it requires a boat			
Hitchability	poor, but shuttle services are available			
Length	15 miles			
Season	April (desert peak, early spring)			
Gauge	North Fork Virgin River near Springdale			
Put-in	Chamberlain Ranch			
Take-out	Temple of Sinawava uppermost parking, or use free shuttle from Ranger Station			

There may not be a finer class III adventure in the lower 48. This magnificent run through the Zion Narrows is set over 1000 feet deep in a slot canyon of epic proportions, where the North Fork of the Virgin River carves its way through what seems like the middle of the earth. Accessing a gorge of this scale is usually relegated to those with class V abilities, but that is the beauty of this run—boaters with a sense of adventure and possessing class III abilities will be able to navigate this run. The scenic value of this run is on par with the most classic adventure runs in the west and an overnight trip is highly recommended to prolong the experience in this committing environment (although easily run in a long day). This run will be one to remember.

At lower flows (400-700 on the NF gauge) the top three miles of the run will be horribly shallow and will contain a few likely portages for wood. After a few miles you enter the canyon and the scenery becomes fantastic, though the flow does not increase until you reach the confluence with Deep Creek, around six miles in. Many will curse the authors continually, since at any normal flow the top of the run is going to kind of suck. Trudge on for the nine miles of reward at the end. Just before reaching the confluence you will enter an open room within the slot where the creek exits via a 15' waterfall (IV). The more water the better for this one as the entrance can be shallow and slow. There is an easy portage through a cool natural walkway on the left. This section of the slot is magical.

Once you reach Deep Creek it finally becomes possible to take vertical paddle strokes, a just cause to celebrate. The scenery only gets better as you paddle deeper and deeper into the narrows. There isn't any chance for escape but due to the nature of the whitewater and the general aura of this place, escape will be the farthest thought from your mind. There are a few significant class III rapids and one that I remember in particular just below the confluence with Kolob Creek where a dangerous log must be avoided. The whitewater never becomes any more difficult than this, except for a few drops near the take-out at the Temple of



ES KM BC FALLS, EASILY PORTAGEABLE

THE BEST CLASS III ADVENTURE PADDLING IN THIS GUIDE, POSSIBLY THE LOWER 48, AFFORDS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERMEDIATE PADDLERS TO ENJOY THEIR FIRST WALLED-IN EXPERIENCE.

Virgin • Zion Narrows

ES SAM CHESLEY & TIM PAYNE SCENERY ABOVE THE TRIBUTARIES

Sinawava where the run opens up (these are approaching class IV at higher flows and can be scouted if necessary).

There are some great side hikes up slot canyons on this run and I would especially recommend Orderville Canyon. Orderville, if it had enough water, would be an awesome expert run from the looks of it, but it would require a major rain event to get it going and therefore timing would be difficult. Access to Orderville can be obtained via the same put-in road for the narrows run. This is a classic in all respects and it's likely that some of the other tributaries offer great adventures whether hiking up them or paddling down them when they have adequate flow and access.

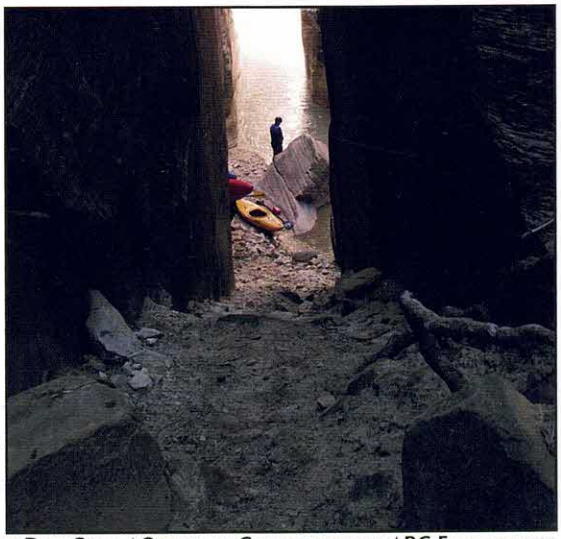
One way to bring your eager and athletic friends down this run might be to have them carry an inflatable in while hiking along the creek until after the Deep Creek confluence. With some precautions, good instructions and basic safety an in-shape beginning paddler could probably navigate the narrows in an IK, though I'm not suggesting that there wouldn't be any added dangers to this option. Your friends will thank you when it's over. In general I am not one to get excited about class III but everyone will enjoy this run and I would love to do this run again. No doubt!

Shuttle Beta: If it is early in the season there is a possibility that the North Fork Rd will be closed or snowed-in. It may be advantageous to pay for a shuttle for the Zion Narrows, although you will have to pre-schedule and the going rate is around $75.

To check on the road conditions and/or the availability of a shuttle contact Zion Rock And Mountain Guides (435-772-3303), or Red Rock Shuttle (435-635-9104).

Directions

Start the adventure from the tourist town of Springdale at the South Entrance of Zion National Park, and drive west on Hwy 9 to enter the park for a $20 week pass per vehicle. Approximately one mile from the entrance turn right to the well-marked visitor center to obtain parking and boating permits, both of which are free as of 2006. Once the proper clearance has been granted, continue east on Hwy 9 (actually driving North), and make a left onto Zion Canyon Scenic Drive. This road is reserved for shuttle buses, unless you have the special parking permit. If you are just paddling the Zion Narrows, then park at the Temple of Sinawava. Drive back to Hwy 9 and turn left where you will climb the switchbacks up and out of the park. Travel 4.3 miles past the park and turn left onto North Fork Rd (if you reach Zion Mountain Resort you went to far). Drive 17 miles North (crossing Orderville at 11.5) on the dirt North Fork Rd to the put-in at Chamberlain Ranch (private land that grants public access).



ES (ALL) ♦NARROWS ABOVE DEEP CREEK ♦ORDERVILLE CANYON SIDE HIKE ♦BC FALLS PORTAGE

Virgin • Zion Narrows

Temple of Sinawava

CFS	200<min<400<best
Class	IV<300<IV+ (V)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	90 fpm action
Length	8.5 miles
Season	April, May, Rain
Gauge	NF Virgin nr Springdale
Put-in	Temple of Sinawava
Take-out	Visitor Center

Zion. Nine in ten visitors to Zion National Park travel into the Temple of Sinawava—by shuttle. In one of the National Park's finest systems of efficiency, anyone who wishes to enter the Temple must do so by a convenient roadside shuttle bus, except for boaters. We are given the option of driving our own shuttle, or kicking back and letting the busty retired driver be our shuttle bunny. You need to get a free boating permit from the back country desk at the Visitor Center to exercise this option (see Narrows description for park details).

From the parking lot and shuttle drop, you can hike upstream to get a couple of extra class III or IV moves with great eddy hopping. It's a nice fix because the river for five miles below the put-in is mostly sightseeing. Luckily you're in God's country and if it isn't the damned finest scenery I've nearly ever seen, I don't know what is. Towering canyon walls reach up to the heavens, blocking out all but a sliver of blazing sunlight.

You pass over a small dam as you enter the Court of the Patriarchs. Get your warm-up boof stroke as you the launch the five-foot Corral Falls. Rounding the corner, you enter a deep red section of the canyon and drop into Satans Staircase. Satans is where the steepest of the action is, but for the next 1.5 miles the river drops through tight boulder gardens. At high water this stretch may have the intermediate paddler pretty gripped. When you see a monster pile of rocks on the right, you are approaching Landslide Rapid, where the river pinches down between the highway and the canyon wall. Two more sloping drops with holes exist before the canyon opens up and you cruise on in to the Visitor Center where your rig is already waiting. If you don't want any piece of Satans Staircase you can easily run the upper five miles and hitch the shuttle upstream of the Birch Creek bridge.

Directions: Take Hwy 9 east from La Verkin to Springdale and on to the National Park Visitor Center. Go in and get your free permit. Drive up Hwy 9 into the Zion Park and flash your permit at the attendant manning the left turn onto Zion Canyon Rd. Drive up to the shuttle drop, park by the river and drop your boats and gear. Drive back down to the Visitor Center and take the shuttle back up to the put-in.

Virgin River Gorge (Bloomington Gorge)

CFS	250<min<600<best
Class	III
Quality	★★★
Gradient	10 fpm
Length	13 miles
Season	April, May, Rain
Gauge	Virgin nr Bloomington
Put-in	Man-o-War bridge
Take-out	Cedar Pockets RA, I-15

The Virgin River crosses to the west side of Hwy 15 below Bloomington, leaving the road and most humans behind as it carves through a tract of desert wildlife habitat. This is a long thirteen mile run. The first nine miles are usually scenic meandering flatwater through the Joshua Tree Natural Area. If you are traveling from any distance you'll want to shoot for high flows. Due to its distance from the headwaters in Zion, the gorge can easily be caught on the surge the day after a flash flood. The boating will be much more interesting at these flows.

Limestone creeps above the tamarisk as you enter into the gorge. A little over a mile after you enter the gorge there is a possible portage of a small dam. If the dam is forming a surf wave, you have timed your visit well. Below the Barrier Dam the canyon deepens and paddlers are treated to a stunning geologic band, similar to those found in the Grand Canyon. There are a few scattered rapids, but even at flood levels the difficulty never gets harder than class III. Expect a few small drops to make things interesting once you begin to parallel I-15.

Directions: The take-out is at Cedar Pockets Rest Area on Hwy 15, south of the AZ/UT border. The put-in is north on I-15 to the Bloomington Exit (#4). Continue on the frontage road a 1/2 mile west and turn right onto Man-o-War Rd. Drive down to the river and put in.

ES Sam Chesley in the Temple

KM ES LDS Falls

Timpoweap Canyon

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	275	400	600	800
Character	limestone bone	channelized	muddy good time	juicy mud
Class	V- (NR)	V- (V+)	V (V+)	V+
Quality	★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	100 fpm			
Remoteness	deep canyon, near roads			
Hitchability	poor (see directions)			
Length	3.2 miles			
Season	March to May			
Gauge	Virgin River at Virgin			
Put-in	Hurricane Canal Trail			
Take-out	Pah Tempe Hot Springs (by permission) or 200 W Road Bridge			

Timpoweap Canyon is a class V gem in the southern Utah desert, located just upstream of La Verkin. This short run consists of fantastic boulder garden limestone rapids from start to finish, and the 200' deep canyon gives the run a remote feel without being too far off the beaten path. Massive chunks of limestone dot the riverbed, which offer up many eddies and deep channels, as well as a fair amount of sieves. Higher flows will make the eddies smaller and the rapids bigger.

The biggest action of the run comes from the optional upper put-in at the Quail Creek Diversion Project, where Licensed Drop Specialists can run LDS Falls (V+). This river left side 40' vert places paddlers into the top of the canyon. Those that take the plunge will be rewarded with two class V drops in a walled-in gorge, the second of which contains sticky holes that could be tough to clear at high flow. When we ran LDS at 500 cfs we each took a pretty big hit, partially due to the shallow lip making it tough to really soar the drop. Higher flow would likely make LDS better, and the ensuing rapids bigger.

If the top looks scary, then put in just below the walled canyon, and enjoy the V- boulder garden action that starts up quickly. Most of the action is boat scoutable, but when the rocks pile up high enough to make the view downstream uncomfortable, scout river right. The first likely scout will be of Crux, and a missed line in the right side entrance can quickly lead into an ugly undercut pocket.

ES KM ALMOST TO THE HOT SPRINGS

The action continues to a manmade pool about 1/3 of the way into the run, signifying Mormon Falls. More eddy-hopping action continues until the next horizon line lead-in of Blue Ball Falls, which contains a meat right-channel entrance, or a sneak on the left that ends at the same place. About a ¾-mile high-action boat-scoutable run-out quickly delivers you to the hot springs. A good option would be to pay for the hot springs with your parking. Then when you hit the hot springs you literally *hit* the hot springs directly from the eddy where the clear and hot mineral water cascades into the chocolatey flow.

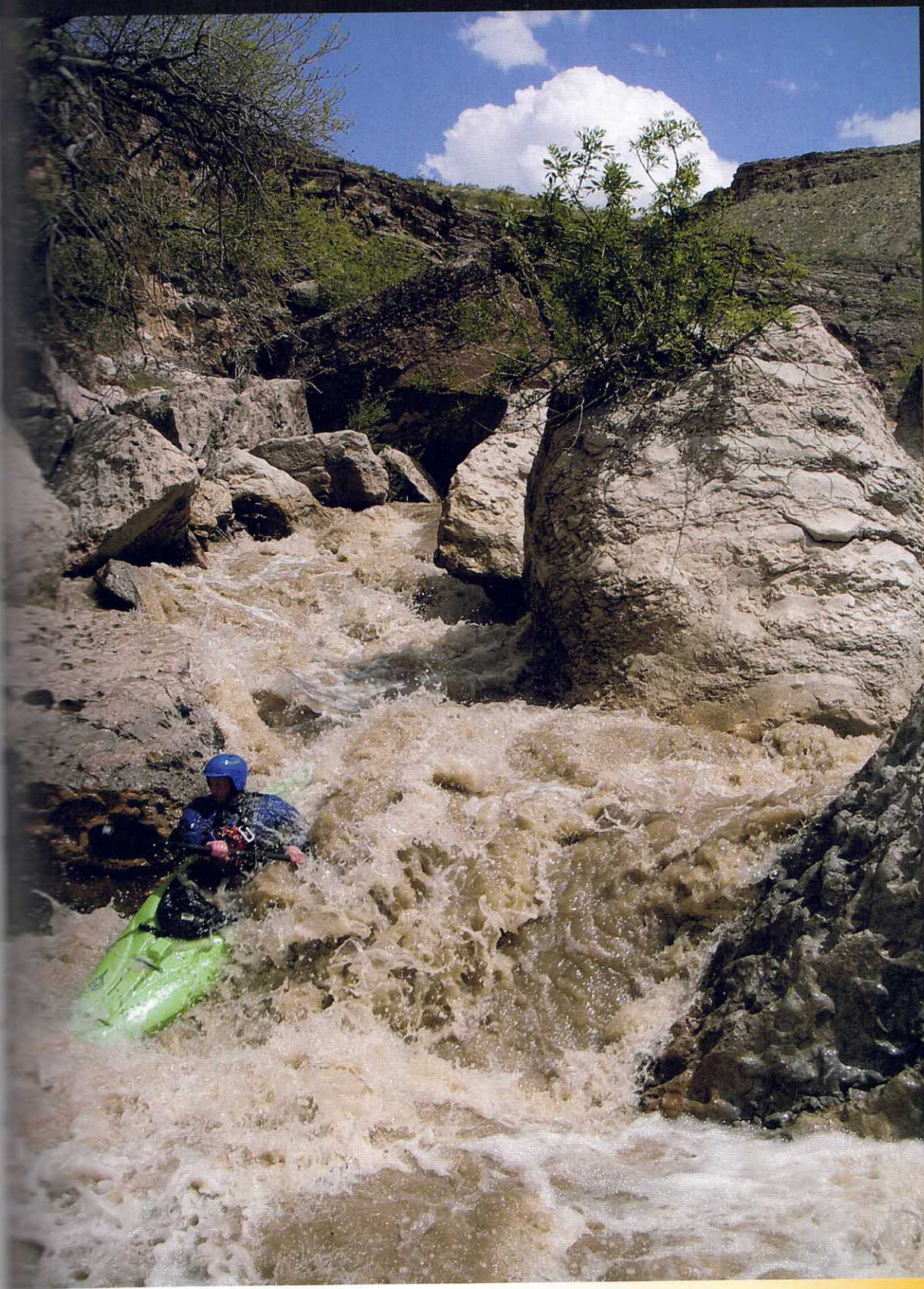
Bike Shuttle: Use the Canal Trail for a premium single-track bike shuttle.

Directions

To get to the take-out take Hwy 9 in La Verkin to the obvious bridge over the river, and turn onto the unmarked private road on the south side of the river and east side of the road. The road leads to Pah Tempe Hot Springs, where you must request permission to park, usually for a small fee. An alternate take-out is found by driving west on 600 N St, and then north on 200 W St to the bridge.

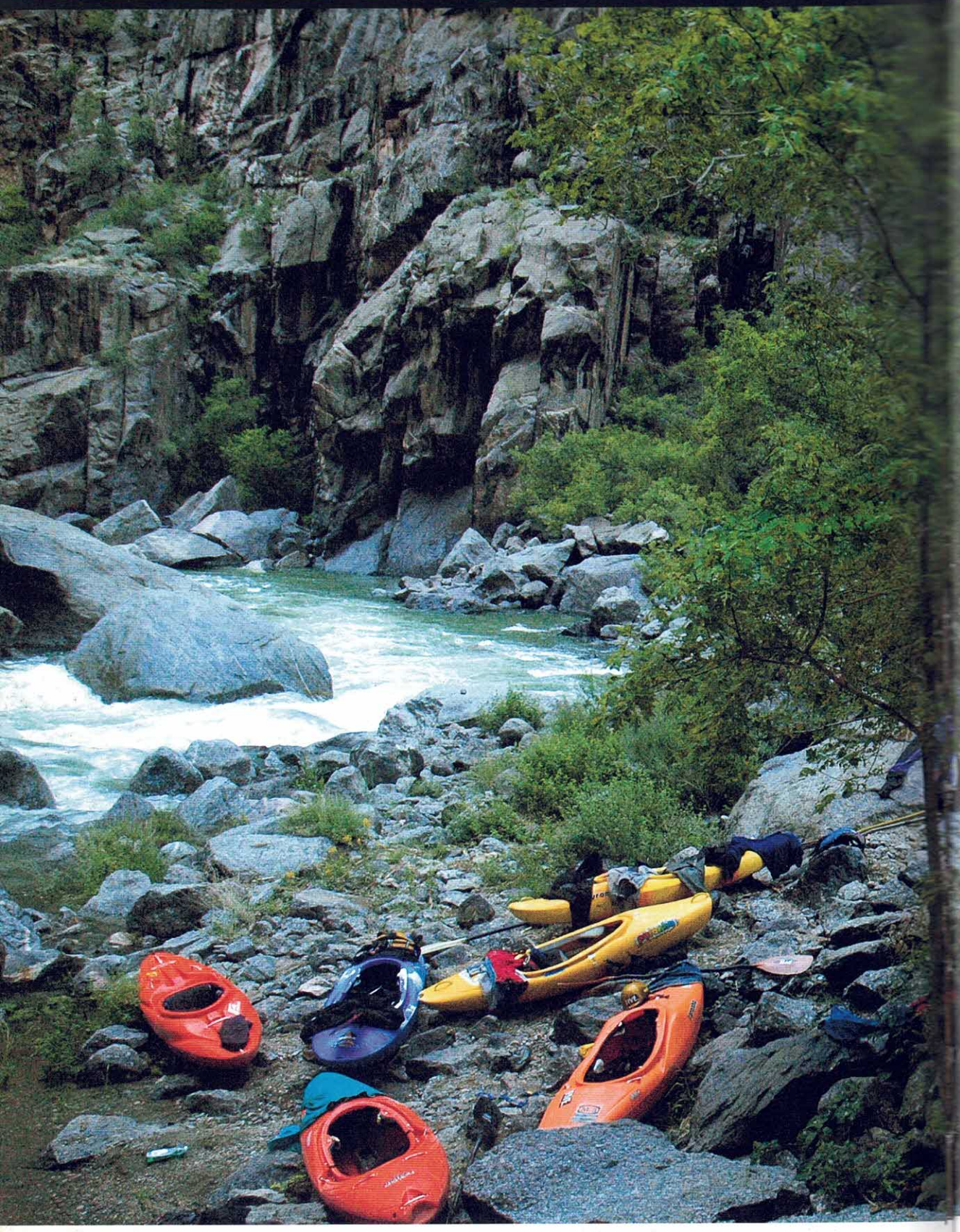
The best put-in is found by taking Hwy 9 east until just before the town of Virgin, and then turning right onto Sheep Gulch Rd. Cross the river and drive away from it, slowly veering right. Turn right on the fifth dirt road, which has a sign for the Historic Hurricane Canal Trail, and go right at the fork. A brick outhouse at the end of the road signals the correct parking area. Hike down to the river on the downstream side, or on the upstream side if you think you want to run LDS falls. Razor-wire-topped fencing makes the right side portage of the LDS gorge difficult, not to mention illegal.

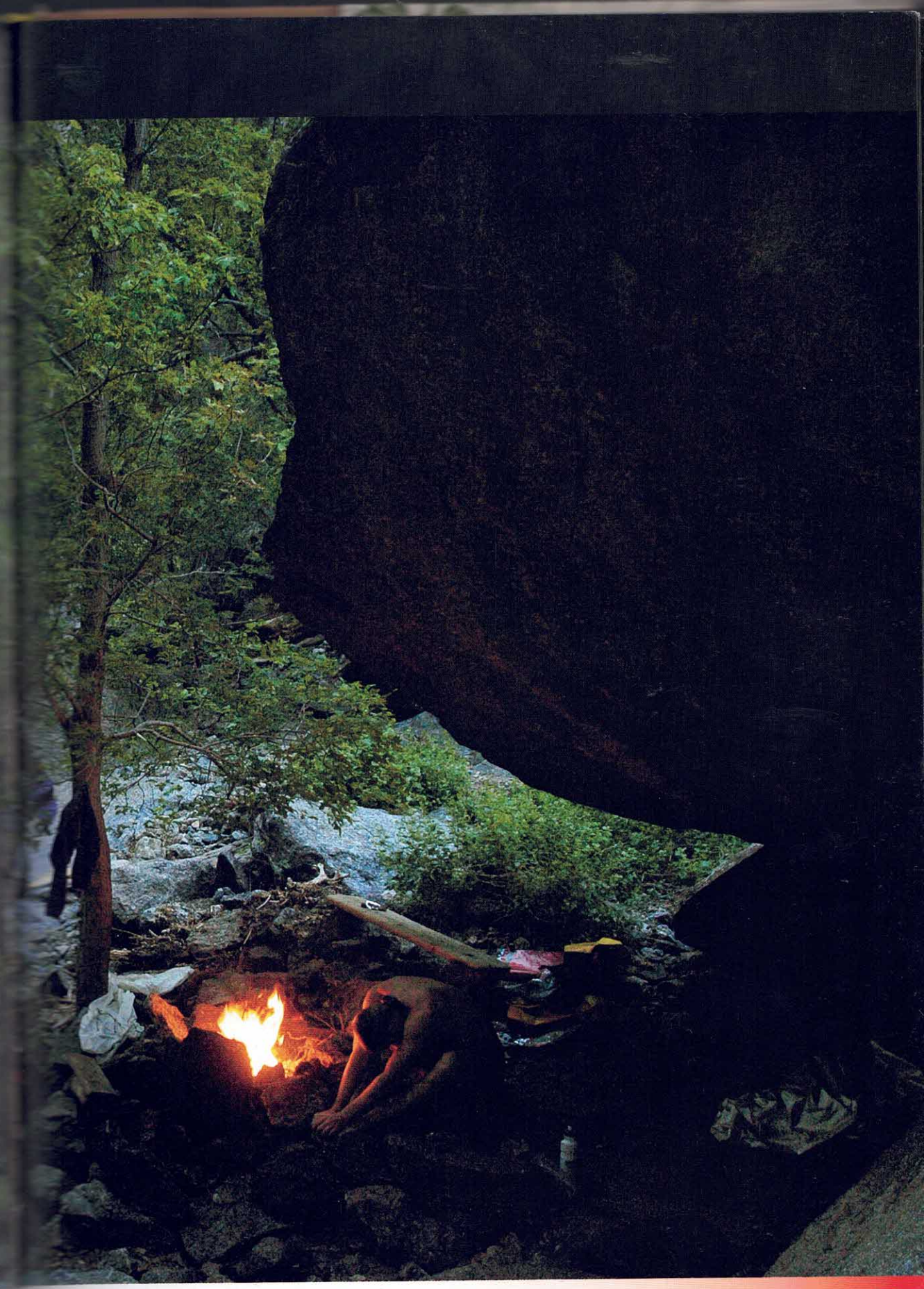
Conglomerate limestone high quality boulder rapids tucked away in a desolate southern Utah canyon. A true boater's oasis, hot springs and all.



Virgin • Timpoweap Canyon

KM ES Blue Ball Falls





KM Jason Ely 6:00am, Cave Camp, Black Canyon

Cimarron River

The Big Cimarron gathers its West, East and Middle Forks from the jagged peaks of the Uncompahgre Wilderness. All three of these forks are ripe for exploration, especially for those willing to schlep their boats deep into pristine wild lands. For the trout fisherman these forks are a virtual paradise as well. The land is still wild as the forks merge to form the Big Cimarron, and as far as the locals are concerned this is still the wild west. Boaters should be aware of access issues at both ends of the Big Cimmaron Valley.

Big Cimarron

Looking for a great adventure run with new and improved logistics. Look no further than the Big Cimarron Valley. For the boulder-choked-whitewater-seeker this is a quality run that does not involve any hiking, major portages, and if you follow the access directions closely any *major* landowner issues. Wood and steep technical whitewater will see most parties making a few choice portages. You will want over 600 cfs on the gauge because it is merely a barometer of what is up high in the drainage. A visual inspection at the put-in should reveal over 350 cfs bare minimum since a short ways below the put-in a diversion dam steals approximately 100 cfs.

CFS	500<min<700<best
Class	V+ (NRs, P)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	190 fpm action
Length	6.4 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	Cimarron nr Cimarron
Put-in	Big Cimarron CG
Take-out	Larsens Special

The warm-up is fast and tight and begins not long after you've snapped your spray skirt into place. About a mile into the run the gradient stiffens to nearly 250 fpm and you had better be on your toes. A quick scout is essential at the first major rapid Mini Zeta. It can be done legally from the island near river left but a stealth approach is still prudent. Both sides of the river are private property and an angry caretaker has caused loud confrontations in the recent past.

The only mandatory portage is on a right hand turn in the meat of the run. Portage left through a non-designated camp spot. Even at high water there are eddies but it can be easy to get out of control if you are too lax about paddling around blind corners. There is a particularly bad piece at the end of the last major long rapid, Mitchendectomy, which has produced some carnage. The action remains constant, but a step down from the initial crux, for the next few miles. Eventually things ease up and you find yourself exiting the tight forested valley and entering a broader, more meandering zone.

Larsen's Take-out Advice: Avoid the wood choked, barb-wire infested, hostile environment downstream and take out at the end of the 4WD road near the Cimmaron State Wildlife Area. Mark your take-out when running shuttle so you don't paddle past it on accident.

Directions: From Hwy 50 between Cimarron and Montrose turn south onto P77 Rd and follow it until it turns into FR 858. Put in at the Big Cimarron CG downstream of Silver Jack Reservoir. The Chris Larsen take-out can be reached via the Little Cimmaron Rd (864 Rd). Drive until you see a Cimarron Wildlife sign and turn right. Follow this dirt road which will turn into double track and get a little bit steep for about five miles. Turn right in a small field and then the road really starts to drop you down to the river. Pre-scout the take-out eddy. The old take-out is at the Cimmaron Rd bridge, east off of P77 Rd.

Lower Cimarron

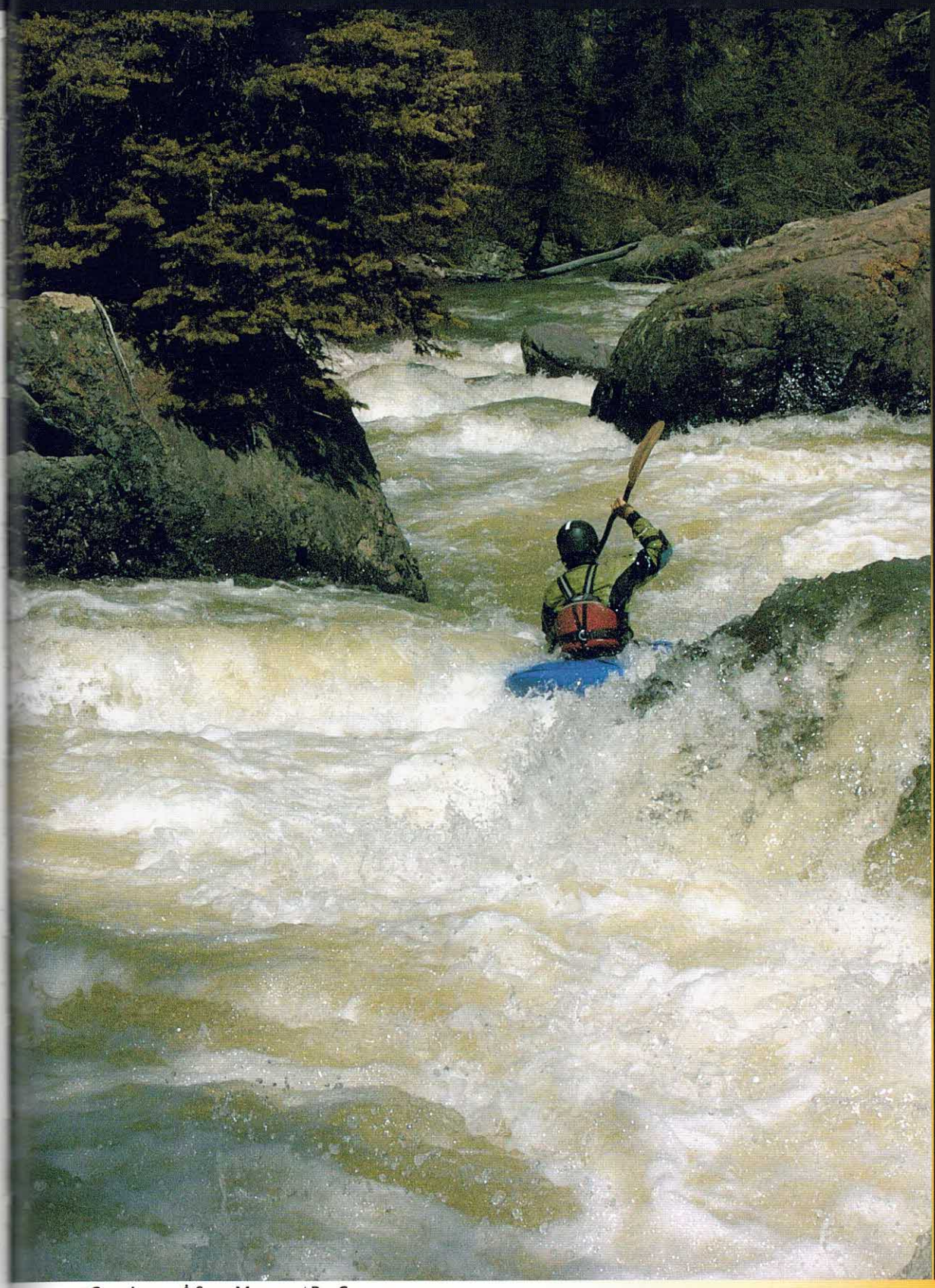
The Big Cimarron merges with the Gunnison River between Morrow Point Reservoir and Crystal Reservoir, upstream of the Black Canyon and downstream of Fluffy Muffin. In the Big C's final throws of independence, the river drops through a series of fantastic frothing moves titled Super Bass-O-Matic. The SBOM begins shortly below the put-in. After passing underneath a bridge, the river drops quickly into a river-wide ledge hole that should not be taken lightly.

CFS	250<min<400<best
Class	V<600<V+
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	120 fpm
Length	1 mile
Season	May to July
Gauge	Cimarron nr Cimarron
Put-in	Cimarron Town
Take-out	Gunnison River

Though the crux action is roadside, below the second bridge class III/IV whitewater drops through a steep walled canyon. With Chamberlain named drops like the Super Bass-O-Matic, the Lower Big Cimarron has attained the status of a classic spring pit-stop. Be sure to tick it off the list if you happen to be in the area when it's flowing.

Directions: Just outside of Cimarron on Hwy 50 head north down Q83 Rd towards Morrow Point Dam. The entire run is visible and roadside to Q83 Rd, which dead ends at a parking lot, and trail to the take-out.

Looking for a great adventure run with new and improved logistics. Look no further than the Big Cimarron Valley.



Chris Larsen Steve Melenick Big Cimmaron action

Black Canyon (M-Box)

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	650	750	1200	1500
Character	kayak assisted hike	bony side of good	padded and good	xtra H2O at sieves
Class	V- (NRs, P)	V (NRs, P)	V (NRs, P)	V+ (NRs, P)
Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	45 fpm, 240 fpm crux			
Remoteness	very committing			
Hitchability	beyond poor			
Length	14 miles			
Season	anytime from May to September, and entirely dam controlled			
Gauge	Gunnison below Gunnison Tunnel			
Put-in	East Portal			
Take-out	Chukar Trail			

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison, at over 2,000 feet deep, can provide kayakers with an unforgettable adventure through a rugged and prehistoric landscape. Many of the rapids contain sieves, and near-miss stories are frighteningly common in this class V canyon. There are numerous places where the river completely disappears under rocks. Frequent portaging through difficult terrain, infested with heavy-duty poison ivy, presents another challenge aside from the whitewater. The Black Canyon is a great adventure in an epic place that should not be taken lightly. Paddling this river can take anywhere from eight hours to three days depending on experience, portaging skills, and stamina. It's a good idea to plan an overnighter to fully appreciate its magic. The amount of quality whitewater isn't worth the effort in getting through the canyon for some, but the extra time in the canyon will make it more worthwhile. The top-notch gorge scenery and amazing adventure is what keeps a select few of us coming back again and again.

Put in at East Portal Campground after checking in with the park ranger and filling out a trip permit. A few miles of warm up rapids will help you to get accustomed to paddling with a heavy load. As you approach an island with a large wall to the left, the river takes a right bend marking the approach to the first big rapid, Daywrecker. Hug the bottom of the island and catch an eddy high on river right to scout. Afterwards, a short mellow stretch leads to a classic series of Black Canyon boulder gardens dubbed Double Drop, Lower Intestine, and the Anus. Be sure to eddy out above the next major horizon line. Triple Drop is a rapid consisting of three waterfalls and has a very slim margin for error. Scout/Portage this drop on the right and get ready for the maze-like Principal's Office just below.

A few rapids more and you enter the Narrows, where the canyon constricts to 40' wide at river level. Look up and enjoy the beauty of the inner canyon, which few have seen from this vantage point. At the Narrows Pinch, hug the right wall and be prepared to walk around a sketchy rock pile shortly below. You'll find some fun rapids downstream, including the new Jr. Ranger Surprise, as you make your way to Ball-Crusher, a complex series of holes and sieves with an undercut zone to the right. Scout left. Continue head's up boating through Cowboy and the Lost Boy Slots to the 18' waterfall—a mandatory boof. Pitoning the 18'er at various levels has resulted in many injured ankles and broken boats (not to mention a tib-fib fracture resulting in a heli-evac). There's a sneak line one slot to the left of the main waterfall if you don't want to risk it.

After the waterfall, get out at the river right slab rock marking the beginning of *the* portage. Within the next mile or so the river sieves-out under rocks repeatedly, and portaging high above river level is strongly advised. This unforgettable experience starts with a 2/3-mile carry on river right through poison ivy, boulders, and scree. Protective clothing is recommended to minimize ivy exposure. Start at the base of the right wall and pick your way

KM Dave Bumgarner playboating in Daywrecker

Frequent portaging over rocky terrain infested with heavy-duty poison ivy presents the greatest challenge away from the sieve laiden whitewater. The Montrose Box is a not-for-everyone run.

Jared Johnson ♦mid pain through the portage, the Painted Wall looming overhead

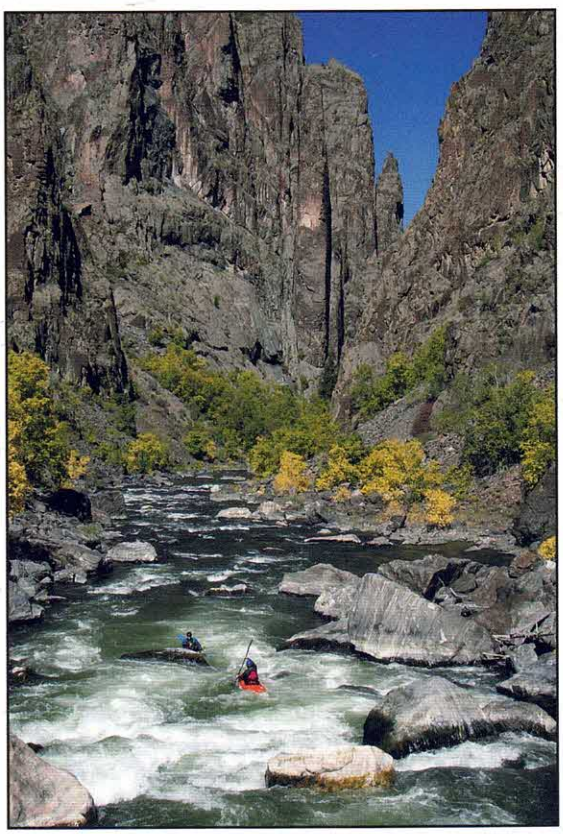
Black Canyon (M-Box)

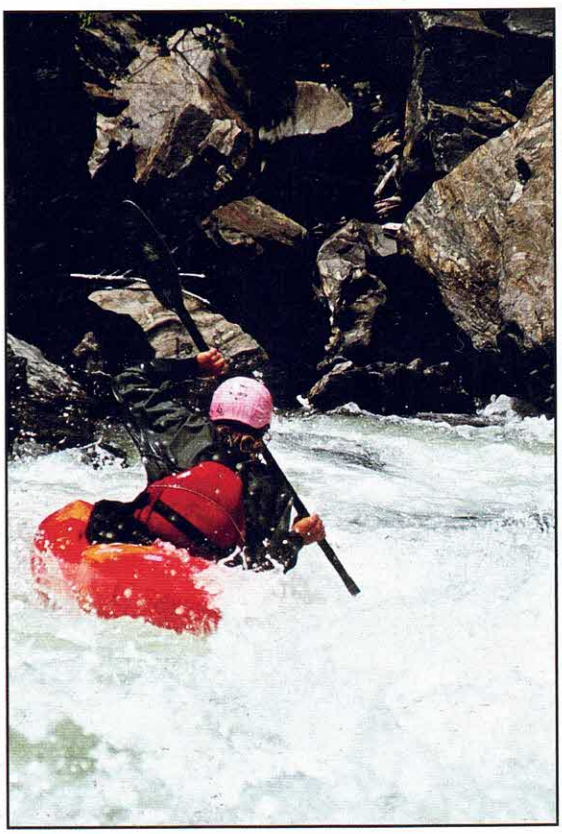
through some difficult terrain. Rock cairns *may* help guide you through various routes. Carry over a series of three hills that lead to a lone pine tree, marking the descent to Cave Camp (ideal for small groups) at river level, and the transition to the river left portage. It's advised to take a river bath, prior to enjoying your first alcoholic sports beverage, to wash off the poison ivy oils.

The next phase of the portage involves ferrying to the river left region known as the Outback. Take the high route along the base of the wall until you come to a grassy knoll. Here you used to have two options—The Hairy Ferry or the Seal Launch. However, monsoon rains in the summer of 2006 have rearranged the boulders at SOB Gully, making these routes less than desirable. The new method is to scramble from river left to right across the large rocks that sieve out the entire river. Team boat passing will make it easier, and this option drops you just above The Holding Tank, for an easy paddle to the river right shoreline. Extremely high flows could make this problematic.

Continue your portage to the base of the next obvious sieve-pile and paddle the run-out rapid to the Beach Camp (large site). The Beach is river-right at the base of the Painted Wall, the highest vertical wall in Colorado at 2,250'. From here run three technically demanding rapids until you come to your last portage around the Great Falls Zone, recognized by a calm pool with a large horizon line. Portage river left up the steep hill to its summit, then follow the game trail and descend down a boulder field to river-level. Run the final class IV+ rapids and enjoy the next 5 miles of mellow paddling to the preferred take-out at Chukar Trail. The final 850' ascent delivers you to cold beer at the shuttle vehicle. If you prefer to paddle 13 miles of the class III Gunny Gorge in a creekboat rather than hike, then the Black Canyon portage probably won't be your cup of tea.

-Bryan Owen, Salida Jr Ranger





Directions

To get to the take-out, drive north on Hwy 50 from Montrose. Just before Olathe (home of Olathe Sweet Corn) turn left onto Falcon Rd, and follow the signs to Chukar Trail. It's recommended to have 4WD trucks and avoid wet roads when possible. Taking Hwy 50 east from Montrose, turning north on Hwy 347, and continuing to the National Park entrance leads to the put-in. The rangers will give you concerned looks, but boating paper work for this run is non-existent. Turning right at the entrance leads to the put-in at East Portal. Heading straight offers a few views from the rim, and Chasm View offers a glimpse of the portage that lies ahead.

CHRIS MENGES 🚶 BRYAN OWEN & KEITH KIRCHNER 💧FALL COLORS IN THE BLACK

LEIF EMBERTSON 🚶 CONOR "CONHAIR" FINNEY 💧RUNNING THE SHIT, AKA TRIPLE DROP AT HIGH SIDE OF GOOD

West Slope • Black Canyon (M-Box)

Jared Johnson Dunbar Hardy action below the portage

REDEMPTION AND PAIN

two one-day trips, a lifetime of adventure in the Black Canyon

By Kevin Crochetiere

4:30 A.M. Dark, cold and the beer that placated my nerves the night before left me with an aching forehead. Pete Roth, Tor Anderson and I launched under eerie, predawn light that doused the Black Canyon walls. I floated and watched intently as we passed the dangerous escape route I had used in 1997. My first Black Canyon attempt ended in extended sieve time, followed by five hours of clawing my way out of the canyon along the cliff faces—suffering from a hugely bandaged face and broken ribs. It was horrendously painful and scary.

First Attempt. "Here we go, DON'T MISS THIS EDDY!" Tim Brown yelled as he ferried from river left to the river right scout of Daywrecker. I began to make my ferry when I abruptly stern squirted, spinning along the river right eddy line, and moving toward the drop. I flipped ten feet from the top of the drop, with my last glance revealing a large boulder splitting the river in two.

"OH SHIT, which way?" I knew the river had one clean line and one sieve, but was unsure which side was safe. A split second decision took control—bail from boat and attempt to climb on top of the boulder splitting the river. I surfaced moments prior to careening off the boulder, tearing off many fingernails as I tried desperately to avoid going over the falls. I was tossed into a green slab of water, taking a 12' plunge onto rocks that formed a sieve. "Good god, I can't move." Blood filling my mouth, ribs broken, torso and head crushed under the force of the river and legs dangling freely into an unknown void, I was body wrapped, "Get off, get off of the rock." My attempts were feeble. Water thundered on my back. "Relax, relax, try again," I was drowning.

Unrelenting wonderment as I began to drift into the scariest thoughts. My mother was young, dressed in her nursing uniform and working at night in the emergency room. Her nursing cap perfectly perched, "Your son was killed in a kayaking accident." I snapped back. "Get off the fucking rock!" One last push-up attempt and I was free, spinning through an underwater flume.

A faint light returned to my vision as I was flushed into a doomy underground cave that gave me half a breath. My forehead hit a sharp rock, and again I was sucked into another pounding. Light now gleamed at the end of a tunnel that I had become lodged in. My river knife and lifejacket were caught, making it difficult to squeeze through the final tunnel. Twisting, clawing, and exhaling my last breath created just enough room for release.

I was free. Kneeling and vomiting through a busted mouth welcomed me to shore. With my ribs stinging and my eye bleeding profusely, I felt alive.

My lower lip took 30 stitches. The ER doctor did a tremendous job of sewing my right eyelid, torn just under my eyebrow from nose to temple. My broken ribs reminded me of the incident for weeks. Thank god he gave me plenty of drugs. The rafting company I worked for demanded that I take a week off because I was scaring the customers with my image.

Now, three years later, I faced my nemises.

7 A.M. of the second attempt. Daywrecker, the first rapid, came quickly. We scouted, our chilled bodies still not quite in motion. It was ominous and powerful, and we had an ugly view of the sieve/boulder ledge I was lodged in for an eternity during my first attempt.

We all were cold and perturbed. Pete's indifferent posture, "Oh shit, if all the rapids are like this, I better wake up." After the quick scouting session I asked Tor, our guide, "Mind if I go first?" He gave me a funny glance. My eagerness to confront this tight juicy piece of classic class V was not congruent with the mood of the morning. "No, no, go ahead..."

Battle time! For three years I wondered, "Would I ever face this scene again?" I peeled out of the eddy from river right, pointing my kayak downstream to the slot between river left and the center boulder. The inevitable confrontation with the horizon line came into focus. The behemoth boulder that split the river in two spewed a geyser of mist, clouding the rapid entrance—it was the same scene I saw moments before being stuffed in 1997.

I paddled furiously, charging to the left side of the river almost overshooting the critical entrance slot. A few quick right draw strokes corrected my attitude, leading me down a steep ramp through the crux of the drop. I tried to get right of the mid-rapid hydraulic and missed. Crashing into the hole resulted in that momentary loss of control every creeker knows. The tail of my kayak caught the current, sending my boat bouncing vertically. I held on as my boating stance resumed normalcy, escaping a potential pounding in the hydraulic.

Finishing the rapid required some quick maneuvering around broach rocks leading to the pool of safety behind a massive rock on river left. The same rock I had clawed my way out from under three years ago. Exhausted and elated I looked up, "Way to go Kev!" someone yelled. I was glad, relieved and wanted beer. Pete and Tor both made it through with some excitement. Tor flipped in the main hole but regained his composure quickly.

I was fried, a lifetime of whitewater angst blown out in 30 seconds. The day was just beginning though and edginess overcame my thoughts of what was left to come. After much manageable but demanding boating, we came to Triple Drop. I walked immediately while Pete and Tor examined the prospectus class V descent.

A dangerous sieve on the river right had seen numerous subterranean swims. I set safety from my boat in a pool below the sieve, gaining a spectacular view of the action. Tor came over the lip paddling sharply, cleaning up the first drop but then spun just a bit leading him into an ugly ledge hole that stopped him cold. He emerged upside-down.

"He's going right!" Pete screamed anxiously, as Tor was curtly stuffed into the depths of the sieve. Silence. We waited pensively transfixed on the scene unraveling in front of us. A boat surfaced out from under the main obstructing boulders at the base of the rapid, then nothing. Moments, years later, an arm, a leg and then Tor's head sprouted from the froth. Is he hurt? His boat was floating right next to him as he swam with a look of surprise.

I was watching Tor's face. "Your boat, your boat," I yelled as he swam for river right's sandy shore. I almost missed his boat as it floated past me into an undercut wall on river left. Numerous times it was almost sucked under the rock wall. With some coaxing, I was able to vertically corral his kayak against the undercut wall. After barely clipping a rope to the kayak cockpit, we were able to retrieve the boat. Tor knows the Black Canyon well, and it was strange to see how quickly things can go wrong. He checked his gear, caught his breath and regained his boater brains in time to lead us through a series of fun rapids above the famous waterfall.

We scouted by paddling within inches of the edge, then backing off. We launched the falls, boofing hard to avoid nose-diving into the shallow landing. My stomach knotted as the lip approached. I landed flat in pleasantly aerated water. As air began to return to my lungs I glanced up to see Pete blast off the lip, his yellow boat brilliantly illuminating the sunlit waterfall spray. Camaraderie was high.

11:00 A.M. We began the portage from hell. We stripped down to hiking mode. Pete and Tor took off at a stout pace leaving me to sweat, cramp, trip and bitch my way through the poison ivy choked boulder field. I frequently lost my balance on wobbly rocks and once I fell, landing on my back. Huge awnings of poison ivy green surrounded us—we were covered with ivy oils. The urge to wipe the stinging sweat from my eyes with ivy-laden hands was unbearable. After an hour I caught up with the guys.

12:00 P.M. "That is where it happened," Tor said, in reference to the death of Chuck Kern. It looked benign, class III-IV, no big deal. However, this is the Black Canyon where the rapids are mazes of sieves and pin-spots. Tor was on that fatal trip and he described their rescue attempt that included expertly and expeditiously executed z-drags established by heroic measures. The end result of Kern's pinned boat was one of the grimmest of river scenarios. The tail of his boat was roped when the boat shifted position, Kern and his kayak slipped into an inescapable crack/sieve.

My shoulder cramped and spasmed from the weight of my kayak. My kayaking mentor Tim Brown warned me before our trip. "You are going to the HOUSE OF PAIN!" These words echoed in my mind.

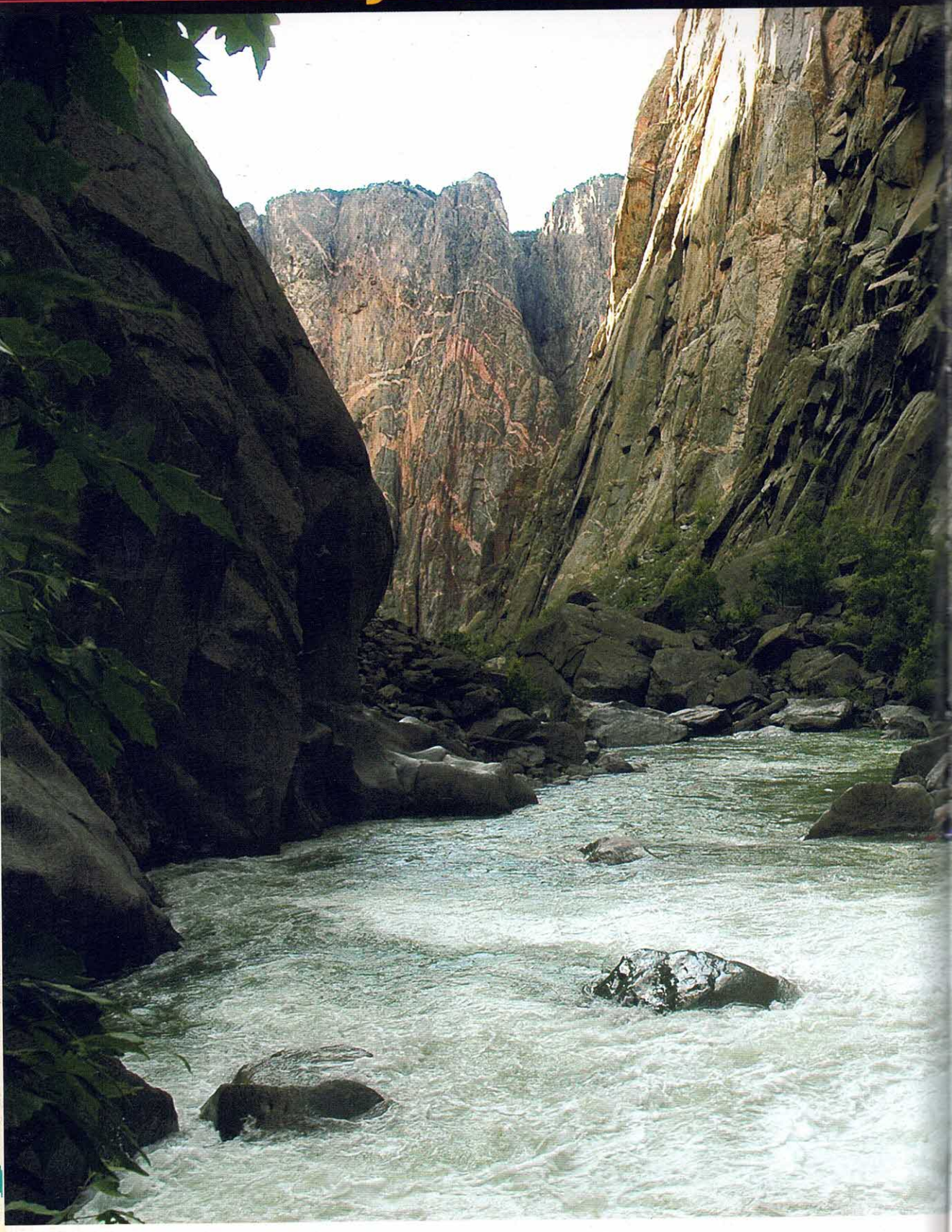
Soon we arrived at Cave Camp, where many choose to stay overnight, catching prehistoric trout in the most overwhelming setting. Compared to other natural wonders I have experienced—the Grand Canyon, Ecuador, the Bio Bio in Chile, and Chamonix's Agui-du-midi, the Black Canyon Cave Camp is far beyond all in beauty. Shear rock walls rise thousands of feet. The river chokes up and drops 50+ feet in a flume of chilly emerald green, and shadows fill all potential escape routes, vociferously reminding us of the impossibility of such an attempt. Tor showed us his stash of camping gear and Jim Beam. We swigged whisky while resting in the sun. I wanted to sleep.

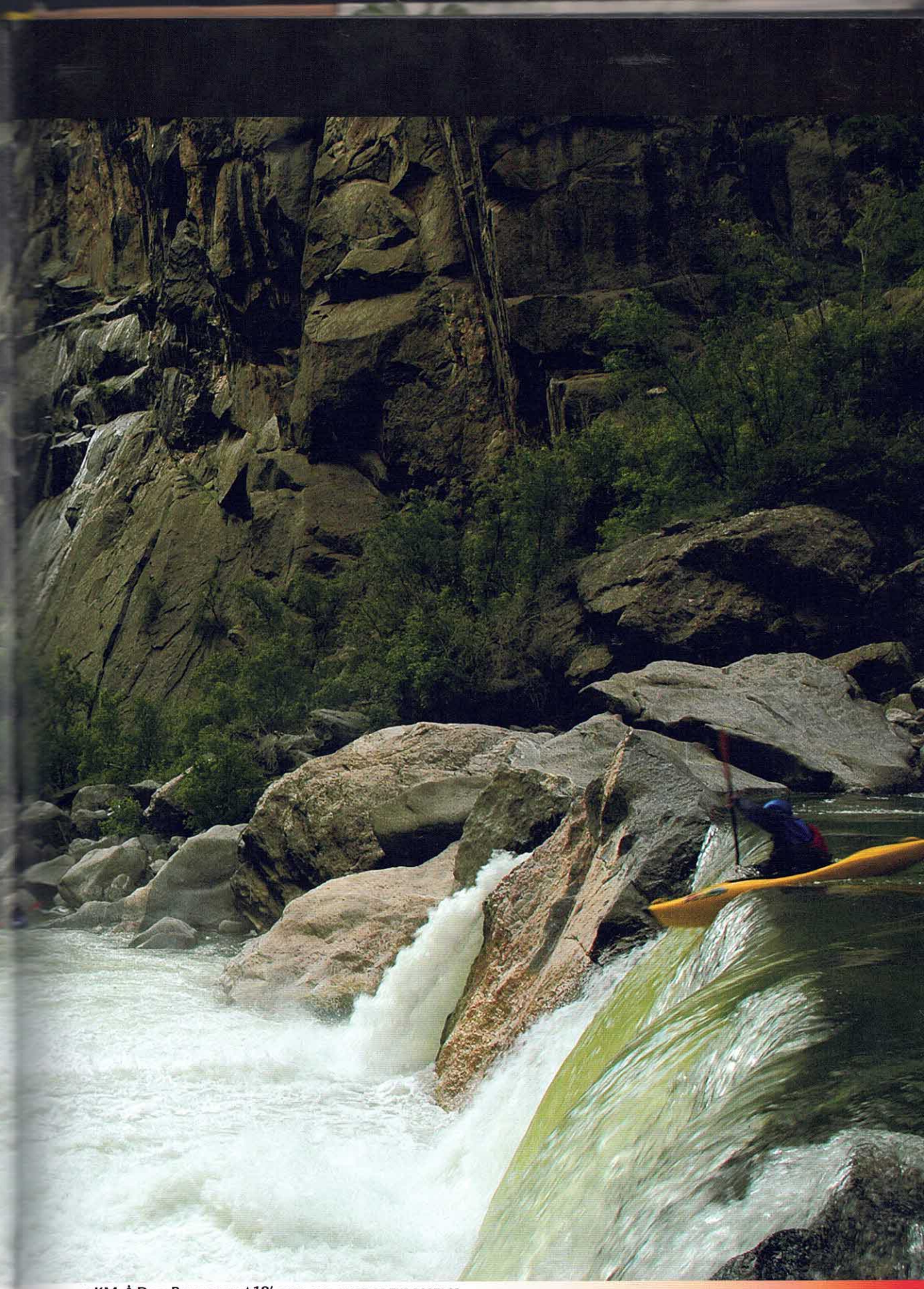
1:00 P.M. The hour began by hand paddling to river left, then walking another half-hour into the heart of the unrunnable stretch. I had heard that the entire river disappeared underground, creating a dangerous landscape. It is a bizarre place comprised of mysterious bubbling pools and undercurrent-laden potholes. We bathed in poison ivy oil removing solvents, and took a brief nap at Beach Camp.

2:00 P.M. The sound of tumbling rocks down a cliff face awoke me. Across the canyon from Beach Camp a fisherman was stumbling down a crack in the canyon face. Unknowingly he had made a bad descent choice. He was walking down into a ravine that ended in a 100' drop. The Black Canyon will always be an unforgiving place.

Energy levels were low as we negotiated the last of the whitewater, and the final portage before the hour long paddle out to Chukar Trail. A painful mile hike to the canyon rim separated us from our car. Ten hours from launch we toasted to a most righteous day of adventure, and for me, redemption.

Black Canyon





KM Dave Bumgarner 18′ falls and start of the portage

Gunnison Gorge

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	500	700	3500	7000
Character	very long day	super mellow	play improves	excellent freestyle
Class	III-	III	IV-	IV-
Quality	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	20 fpm			
Remoteness	high			
Hitchability	poor, but Gunnison River Pleasure Park runs shuttles (970-872-2525)—nice for day trip			
Length	13.4 miles			
Season	anytime from May to September, and entirely dam controlled			
Gauge	Gunnison below Gunnison Tunnel			
Put-in	Chukar Trail			
Take-out	Forks of the Gunnison			

The Gunnison Gorge is a scenic stretch of class III whitewater that cruises through a semi-remote canyon. Arguably one of the best beginner runs in the state, paddlers looking for an adventure can find it here with bumpy 4WD roads, a one-mile hike to the put-in on Chukar Trail and a long day on the river. Low water creates friendly pool drop rapids, and higher flows up the play boating quality without increasing the difficulty too much. I once ran it at flood (9500 cfs) and the memories of river wide wave-holes are enough to send me into daydreams so deep that I get sidetracked from writing this description.

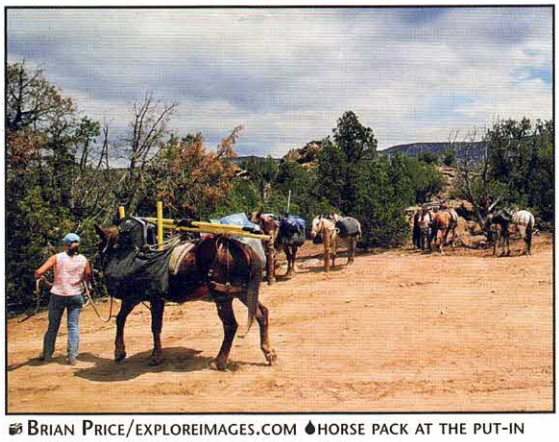
Okay, I'm back. The major downfall to this run is the one-mile hike to the put-in, which limits use to predominantly kayaks and inflatables. Rafters can organize pack horses to carry their gear, allowing for a multi-day trip (with reserved campsites), but the less than 14-mile long run is tough to justify the effort for some. A few rapids in the first 1/3 of the run will get paddlers warmed up, and a number of good play rocks exist. The narrowest part of the canyon pinches the river through about five rapids, the last of which is the toughest on the run (especially for rafts). Just as the inexperienced start to get exhausted from the whitewater, a class II paddle out welcomes groups. Check out the Smith Fork side creek if time allows.

Although setting a shuttle isn't too bad (except in wet weather), a shuttle service is run out of the Gunnison River Pleasure Park, the campground that also serves as the take-out. A user fee is required at the put-in, and this is where groups can register for a specific campsite if spending the night. This is a must do for class III kayakers.

Directions

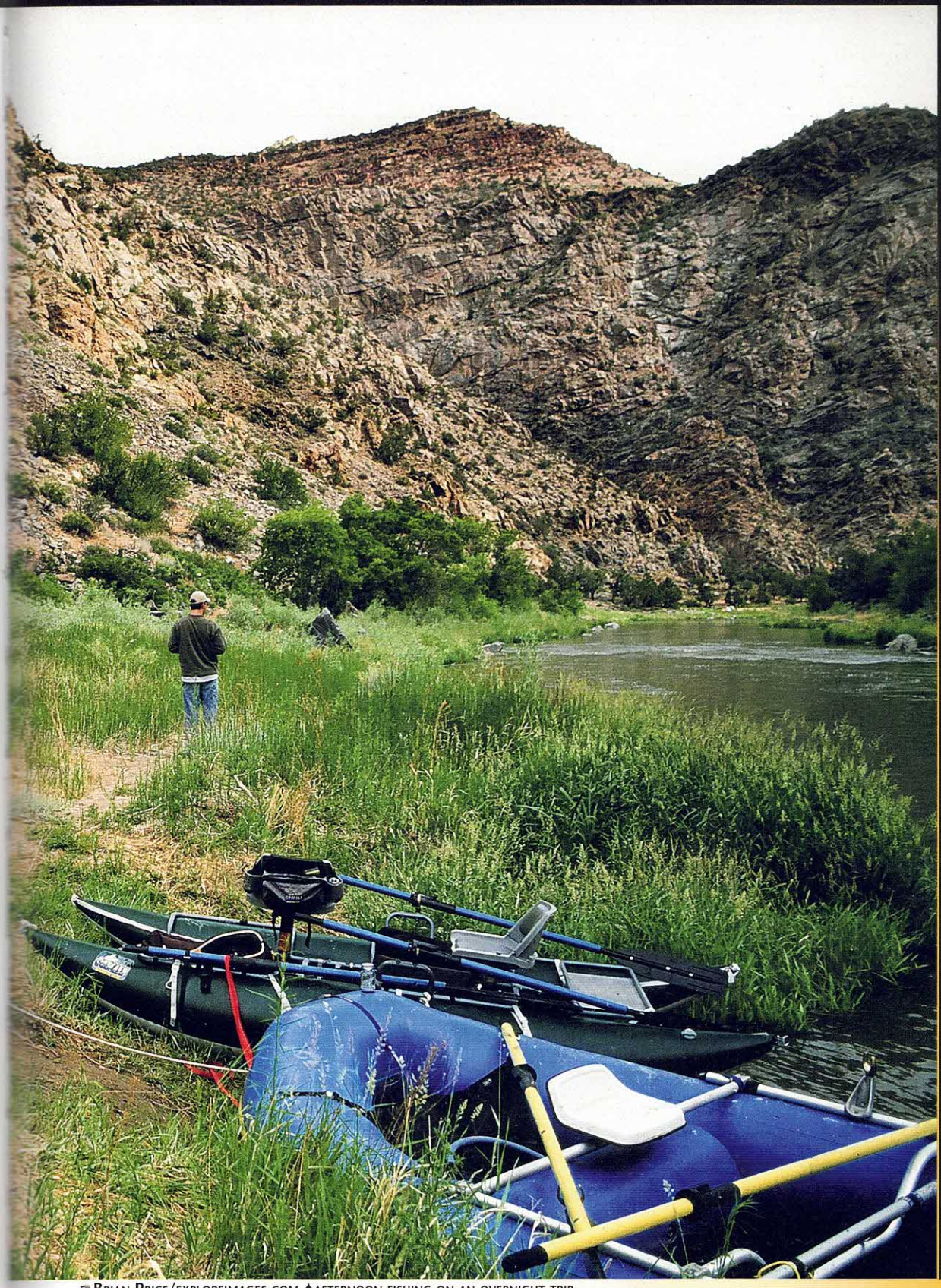
The take-out is found between Delta and Hotchkiss on Hwy 92. Take the Forks of the Gunnison Rd (28.10 Rd) to the south, and follow it down to the Pleasure Park CG and general store. To get to the put-in, drive west on Hwy 92 to Delta, and turn south on Hwy 50. Just past Olathe (home of Olathe Sweet Corn) turn left onto Falcon Rd, and follow the signs to Chukar Trail. I prefer to use the Peach Valley roads, but 4WD trucks are helpful and wet roads are not.

KM ♦ DESERT MUD, AN INTERESTING FACTOR ON THE PUT-IN ROAD



BRIAN PRICE/EXPLOREIMAGES.COM ♦ HORSE PACK AT THE PUT-IN

There are few class III runs that offer the same level of adventure as a trip through the Gunnison Gorge does. Enjoy the long shuttle, the hike down, and the good scenery.



Brian Price/exploreimages.com ♦afternoon fishing on an overnight trip

Uncompahgre River

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	250	450	600	900
Character	The Box only	no box, south huck	QQ is hot	QQ is tough
QQ Class	NR	QQ min, IV+	V-	V+
Box Class	IV+	V-	NR	NR
QQ Quality	not running	★	★★★★	★★★
Box Quality	★★	★	★	★
Gradient	QQ is 200 fpm crux, Southside less, The Box is 175 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside, or only slightly away			
Hitchability	QQ is good, The Box is fair, but reccomended to hiike the shuttle			
Length	QQ is 2.2, Southside adds 2 miles, The Box is 1.7			
Season	late April to July			
Gauge	Uncompahgre near Ridgway			
Put-in	(see text) Big Beige Bridge			
Take-out	(see text) KOA CG on County Rd 23			

Any river that flows through the town of Ouray, the self-proclaimed Switzerland of America, is bound to be in a beautiful and steep place. Not that I've ever been to Switzerland, but if it's anything like Ouray, then it is definitely steep and beautiful.

Draining the north face of the San Juan's, the Uncompahgre parallels the Million Dollar Highway thousands of feet below as the road climbs over Red Mountain Pass. The effect of the gold rush can also be seen, as the river bares the yellow tinge associated with the long abandoned mill pilings that surround the area. Combine in some sightseeing of Box Canyon Falls and an outdoor hot springs dip to make a day out of Ouray, or break up the drive as you continue down the road to your next river adventure. Although most of this area is too rugged to offer up quality kayaking opportunities, the section just downstream of Ouray is quite good, despite being very short.

Quality Quickie

The most intense action comes from a Hwy 550 roadside boulder garden that contains a couple of juicy holes at higher flows. The entrance can be very juicy, and it stays pretty stacked as it bends to the right before straightening back out, mellowing, and leaving the view of the road. Longer runs can be nice, with the uppermost put-in found at the Box Canyon Motel on the southside of Ouray, but I am also guilty of just using the main drop as a quick adrenaline fix while on the road to Durango. The short warm-up option starts at the bridge just upstream. A KOA campground serves as a good lower take-out. Lower flows create a reasonably paced river, but use caution when the river gets over 1000 cfs. The holes get stacked and paddlers have been severely worked.

Southside

If you need more action, and want to explore for it, there are a couple of V- drops above the Box Canyon Motel. Lower the boats down below the lower bridge of the Ice Climbing Park for the jumpstart, and watch for wood in this super short section/park-and-huck.

The Box

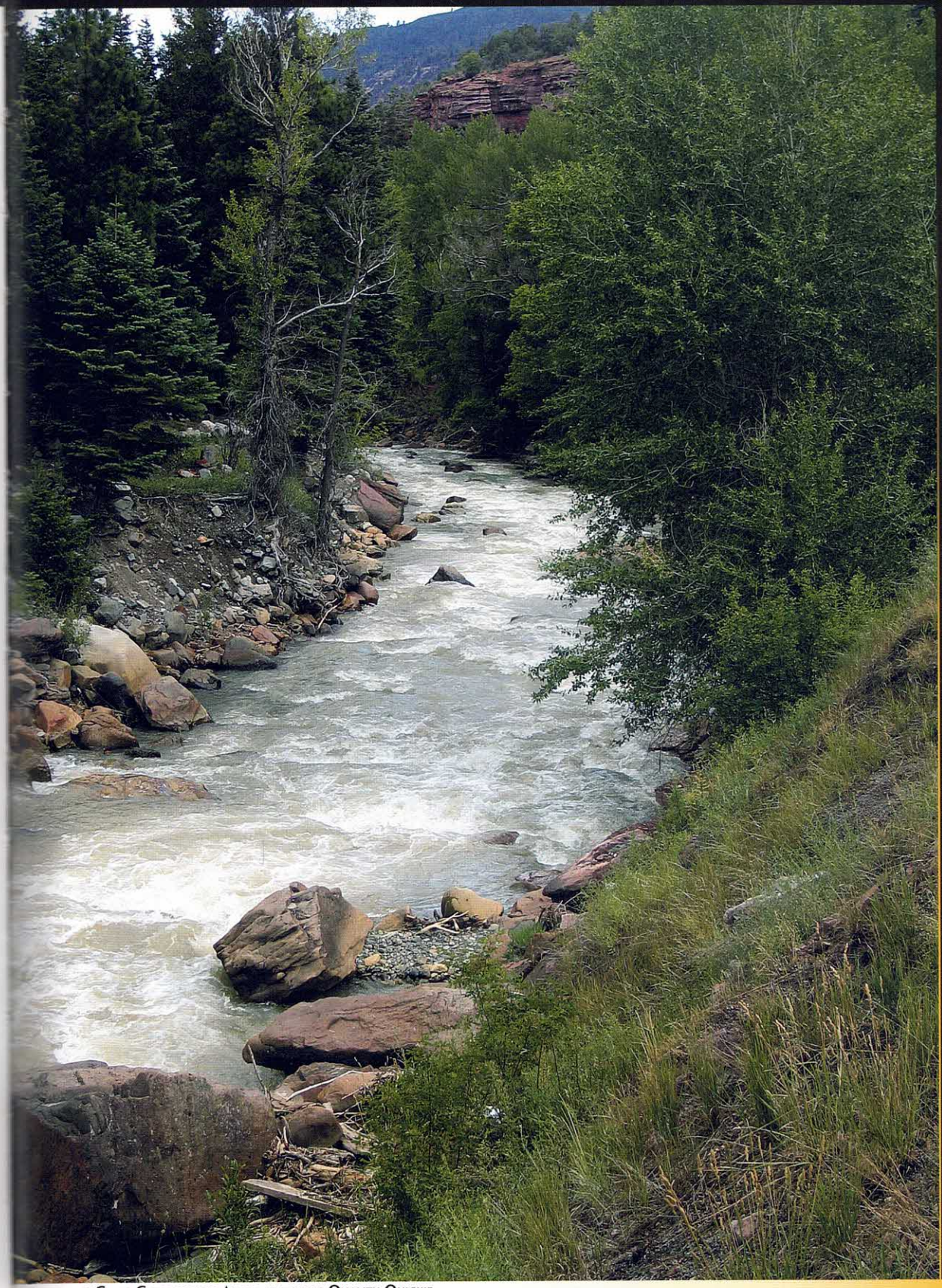
This is not a great section, and it never will be. It's short, walled in with smooth narrow walls, and sees a good bit of wood getting clogged, making it often unrunnable. But, it is a damn cool place, and as with most pretty places, they can be that much better to check out from the cockpit of a kayak. A complete scout from put-in to take-out (read: hike the shuttle in dry clothes) is mandatory to avoid getting stuffed under a log, or putting-in at the wrong place. If in need of adventure, and you are already local, it's an okay low water stretch of V-. And yes, sections of Red Mountain Creek have been run, some parts almost regularly.

Directions

The crux rapid can be found roadside at Hwy 550 where the walls narrow at the north end of Ouray. Put in at the big beige bridge for the Quality Quickie, and take out two miles downstream at the KOA found off of CR 23 (four miles north of Ouray). The standard upper put-in is the Box Canyon Motel.

For the box, use a pull off at the crest above Ouray, where a gated road exists that leads to the take-out above the unrunnable dam. The put-in is about 1/2-mile up, at the left turnoff to FR 878 where the noticeable Red Mountain Creek flows-in. Hike the left side of Red Mountain Creek to the confluence.

The Uncompahgre winds through the corner of Ouray with a tint of yellow from the mining days. Light on whitewater, exploring the Switzerland of America will help round out a day.



Chris Clinansmith ♦ lead-in to the Quality Quickie

Montrose Freestyle

It's strange to think of Montrose as a paddling destination, since most trips to the area generally involve avoiding the small, agriculturally dependent town. Delta doesn't rank much higher, just a suburb of the oddness. Ridgway begins to have a retire-on-a-ranch type feel, but it isn't really a destination visit—more of the boonies to the much cooler Ouray. The Mexican joints are the safest bet for food replenishment in Montrose, where no less than three full-size redneck trucks will be spotted out front. Cowboy boots are much more common than cargo pants, although the occasional small-town punk can still be found with dyed hair and a black t-shirt, loitering outside the 7-11. The main drag is perfect for all-American kids to cruise the town well into the night, since the place lacks any other parent-approved youth entertainment. It's the classic small-town Colorado that, as a kayaker, you'll drive right past—unless you live there. A handful of very good paddlers do, but make no mistake about it, the Montrose Wave and Montrose Box are well-deserved titles, however un-PC they may be.

M-Wave

Rule #1—you do not talk about the M-wave
Rule #2—you do not talk about the M-wave
Rule #3—leave your attitude at home, regardless of where that is.
Rule #4—drive slow when anywhere near the M-wave.
Rule #5—don't play loud music at the put-in.
Rule #6—do not bring more than one car full of paddlers at a time.
Rule #7—park out of sight from the ranch fields.
Rule #8—don't even think about camping out here.
Rule #9—be polite to everyone, especially the locals.
Rule #10—just because you've landed a blunt, doesn't mean you've landed a blunt here. You probably aren't good enough to land it, and you'll likely get throttled when you try.

CFS	750<optimal<1150
Class	IV+
Eddy	intense
Quality	★★★★★ (expert)
Season	April-November, irrigation dependant
Gauge	South Canal near Montrose
Riv Access	S. Canal Rd (private)

This is the most unnecessarily controversial location in this book, and it doesn't need to be. It's true that the feature is accessed illegally, and the feature itself is entirely illegal, since it is in the privately owned South Canal to the east of Montrose. This could pose a problem for paddler access, and potentially risk shutting down the feature for good. It is one of the only decent play spots on the west slope in the off-season and closure would hose local kayakers. However, the legality of this place has been in question since the Chamberlain Bros and company were surfing here in the mid-'90s, and it still hasn't been shut down. Keep the crowds to a minimum, keep common sense high, and everyone can enjoy this feature for years to come.

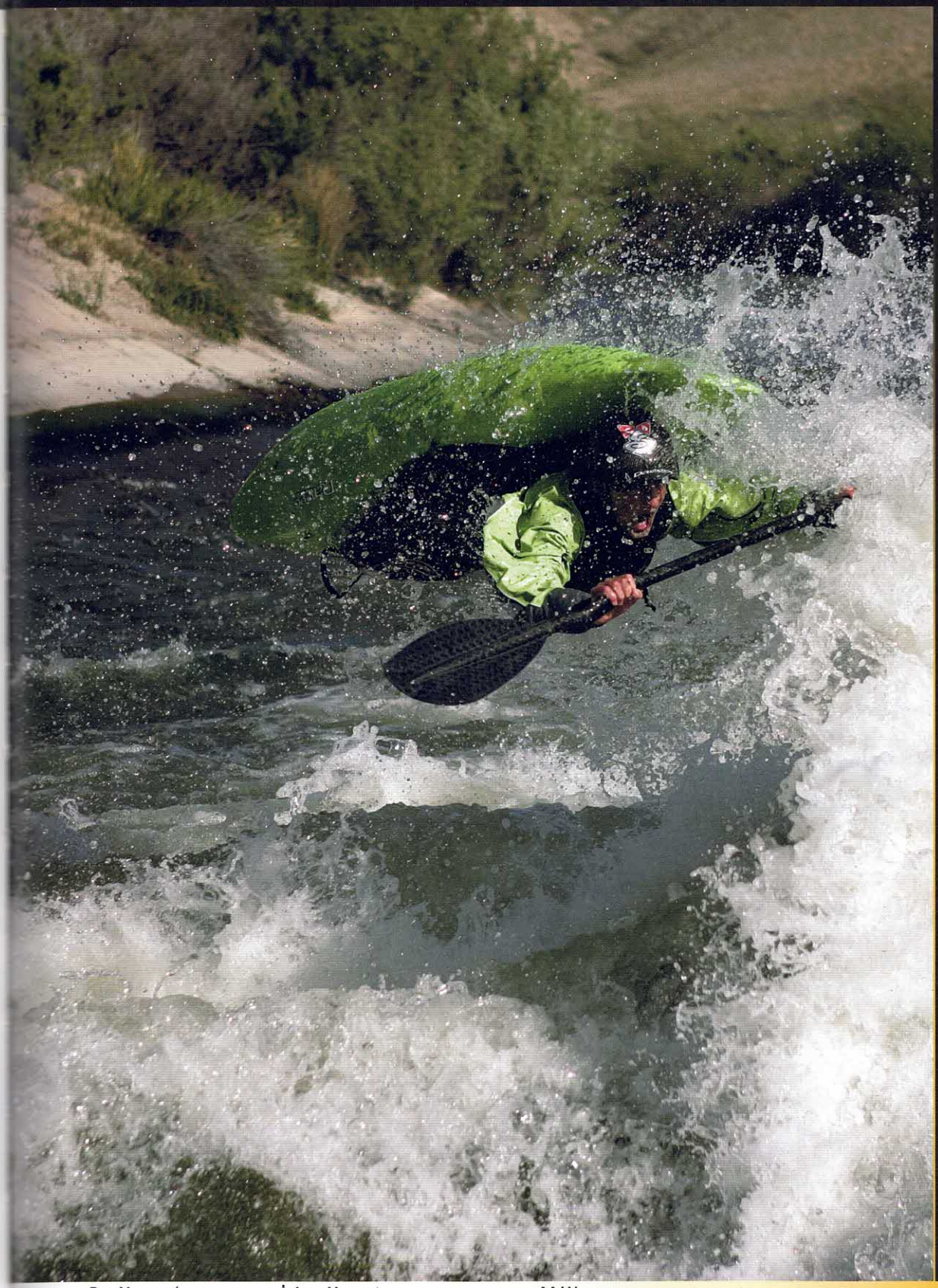
Mark Cohen Alex Hotze the grandmaster of M-Wave

The M-wave resembles a giant rooster tail, but is big enough that it allows for blunts, spins, and other aerial wave moves that require precise execution to land. If you aren't damn good at surfing big rowdy waves, then don't even bother wasting your time here. It is not a good learning spot because it contains very fast water, a shallow concrete bottom, ugly eddy lines, and swirly eddies. A swim here is very dangerous, since the entire canal goes underground shortly below. Basically, the feature is an experts only park-and-play.

Even if you can perform some of these tricks, it's a long drive for most. I first surfed the feature in 2001, spending two weekends in a row here. We shot tons of video, did cool tricks, and had a good time. I haven't returned since, and I'm okay with that.

Directions: Make friends with as many paddlers as possible. Undoubtedly one of them will be into freestyle kayaking, and they may invite you to a place called the M-Wave. Accept graciously, and don't invite any other friends.

Despite being a questionable destination kayaking locale, the Montrose area freestyle is as Napoleon Dynamite as the town—goofy, socially troubled, and damn good for paddlers looking to dance.



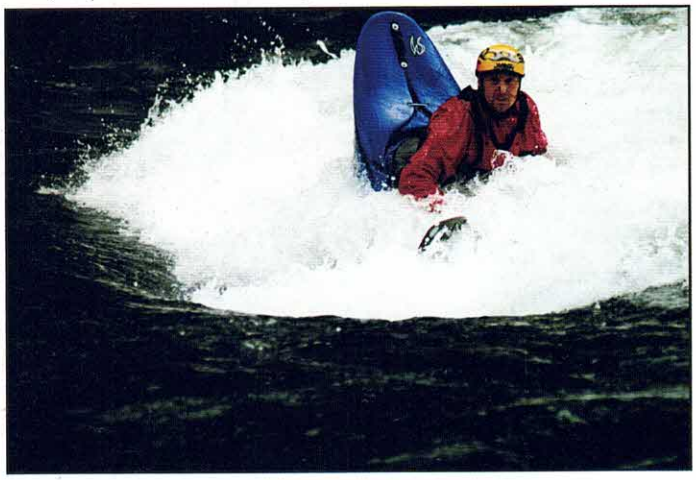
Ben Horton/benhorton.biz Alex Hotze Hot summer day on the M-Wave

Fluffy Muffin

The Muff is a beautiful play hole found in-between two massive dams that control the Gunnison River upstream of the Black Canyon. When I mean a beautiful play hole, I mean quite possibly the best play hole in the entire state, if judging purely by the size of huge aerials and the endless combinations of ends that one could throw if one were so inclined. When it's in, then the quality rating is well deserved.

The Muff can be a shy beast though. Hidden in the shadows behind Blue Mesa Dam, and upstream of the Morrow Point Dam, the feature is affected by the amount of water that the Blue Mesa Reservoir is releasing and by the amount of water that Morrow Point Dam is releasing. The right combination of releases in both dams (controlled by Phoenix's power consumption and demand) will create the optimal feature. It doesn't take much of a shift in water distribution for the Fluffy to get Munchy, or for Morrow to back up creating Lake Fluffy. Thus, the only gauge is visual, and the level can change daily. Paddlers driving any distance should ask others if it has been in, and need to be prepared to get shut down, ideally with some sort of back-up plan in place.

Even if the feature is going off, it usually only runs for a few hours a day (upwards of six), making it even trickier to catch at prime levels. Best bet is between 3:00-5:00pm. Dress warm for the very cold water, and check the status of the feature visually prior to hiking down the Pine Creek Trail to the base of Blue Mesa Dam. It's a good trail, but I prefer to hike down in dry clothes and change at river level.



CFS	visual (see text)
Class	IV-
Eddy	okay
Quality	★★★★★
Season	April-November, dam dependant
Gauge	visual
Riv Access	Pine Creek Trail

Visual Status Check: From Hwy 50, look for the power lines at the top of a hill, to the west of the Blue Mesa Dam. Pull off the road and walk to the canyon rim to get a look at the feature. If a white strip is evident a 1/3-mile downstream of the dam, then the feature is kicking. If the white is gone, then the feature is buried or dry.

Directions: If it's in, continue another 100 yards on Hwy 50, and turn north onto the dirt road, which switchbacks down to the parking area. Hike down to the river, float a short ways downstream, and throw down. Hike back out when done. The hike is pretty mellow as far as streamside hikes are concerned.

Ridgway Park

No shit. It does exist. And, its actually a pretty good double set of holes, formed from the cold waters of the Uncompahgre flowing north to their inevitable union with the Gunnison—after helping to irrigate the Olathe Sweet Corn fields. Access is excellent, and the features allow for standard hole moves at good flow, ideally over 600 for things to get cranking. Best of all, the good eddies will likely be vacant of other paddlers, and the locals will stare in wonder as they watch you desperately try to make it upstream without success. Round out a day with the other Uncompahgre sections, the Ouray Hot Springs, or drive to another kayaking destination.

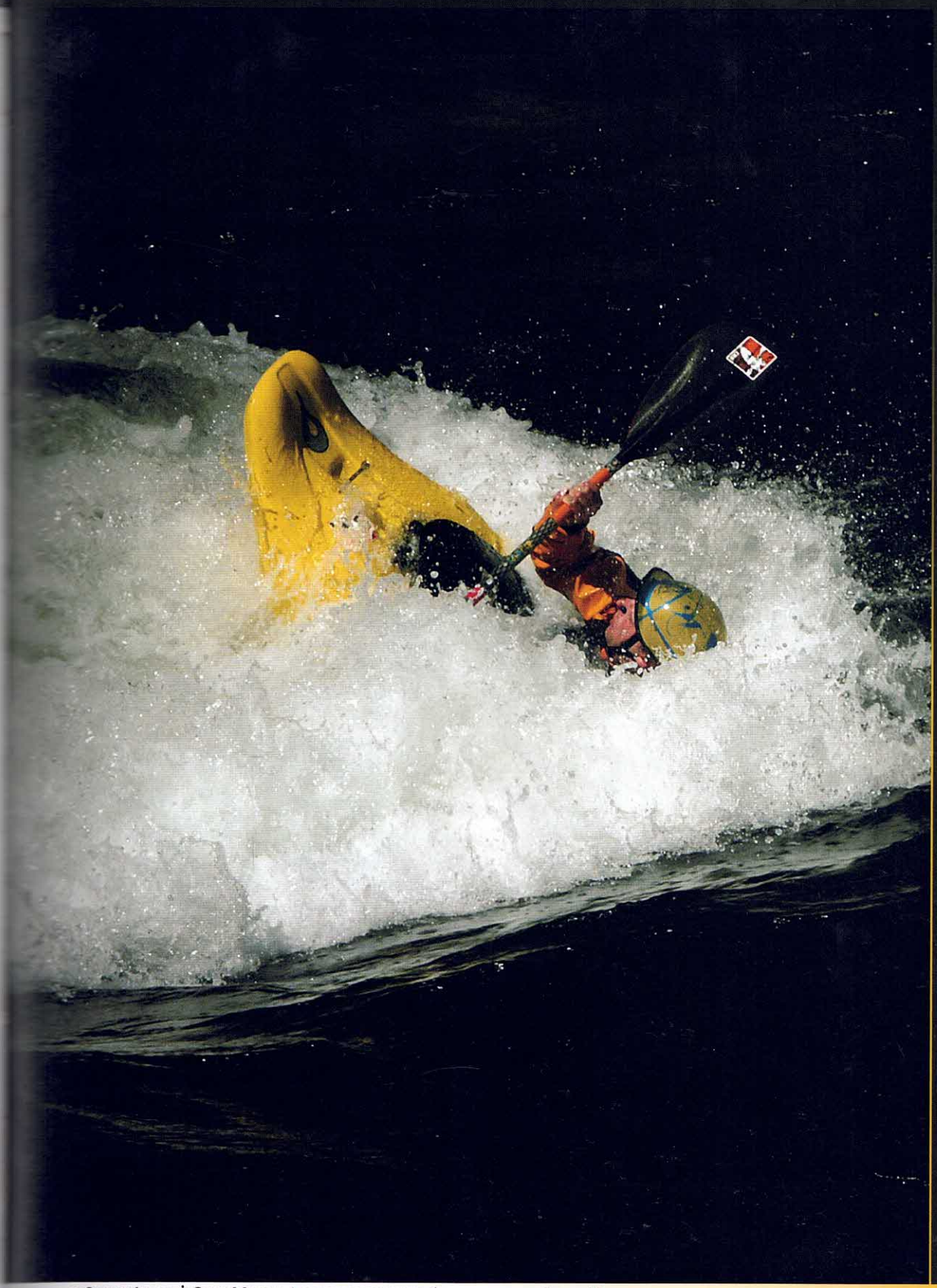
Note: I'm guessing that it's possible to paddle from the Uncompahgre Quality Quickie take-out to the park for some class III style whitewater. I'm also guessing there are fences, and property issues on the shore. Feel free to explore.

Directions: From Hwy 550 in Ridgway (at the stoplight) take Hwy 62 east, cross the bridge in a couple hundred yards, and turn right into the parking lot. The features will be visible from the Hwy 62 bridge.

CFS	350<min 600<optimal
Class	III+
Eddy	good
Quality	★★★
Season	May-June
Gauge	Uncompahgre near Ridgway
Riv Access	Hwy 62 bridge

Mike Paris Brook Aitken the look, a patented Aitken style booster, and his secret weapon at competitions

THE MUFF! HOW IS SHE? SHE PUTS OUT SOME OF THE BEST FREESTYLE IN THE STATE, BUT FOREPLAY INVOLVES DRIVING A LONG WAYS TO SEE IF SHE'S THERE, AND THEN HIKING TO HER IF SHE'S EXPOSED.



SORAYA JACOB CHRIS MENGES A BACKLOOP YOU WON'T FLUSH OUT ON, FLUFFY MUFFIN

North Fork Gunny Valley

North Fork Gunnison

Somerset is an industrial town on the North Fork of the Gunnison, located on the backside of the beautiful Crystal Valley—and nearly as scenic. The North Fork itself is rather uneventful as it passes by this miniature town, but a handful of rocks and okay elevation drop create something for the class III paddler. It's good enough to be a fairly popular stretch, but fairly unpopular since there is a serious-lack of paddlers that live in the immediate vicinity. Plan to run this with friends rather than just finding a group at the river. Shortly below the town of Somerset are the most recognizable hazards of the run—a rock in the center that often collects wood in the left channel, and a rock weir further downstream. Most take out above the rock-weir.

To add to the length of the run, some paddlers combine this with a class II+ section of Anthracite Creek, starting at the Erikson Springs CG. This option necessitates being more heads up for wood, since there are fewer good eddies.

Directions: The weir is visible from the road below Somerset on Hwy 92, and serves as the best take-out. Put in below the Paonia Reservoir, off of 12 Rd.

CFS	1000<optimal<3000 6000<great play
Class	III+<2000<IV-
Quality	★★
Gradient	41 fpm
Length	8.8 miles, or more
Season	May, June
Gauge	NF Gunny nr Somerset
Put-in	below Paonia Res
Take-out	below Somerset

Smith Fork

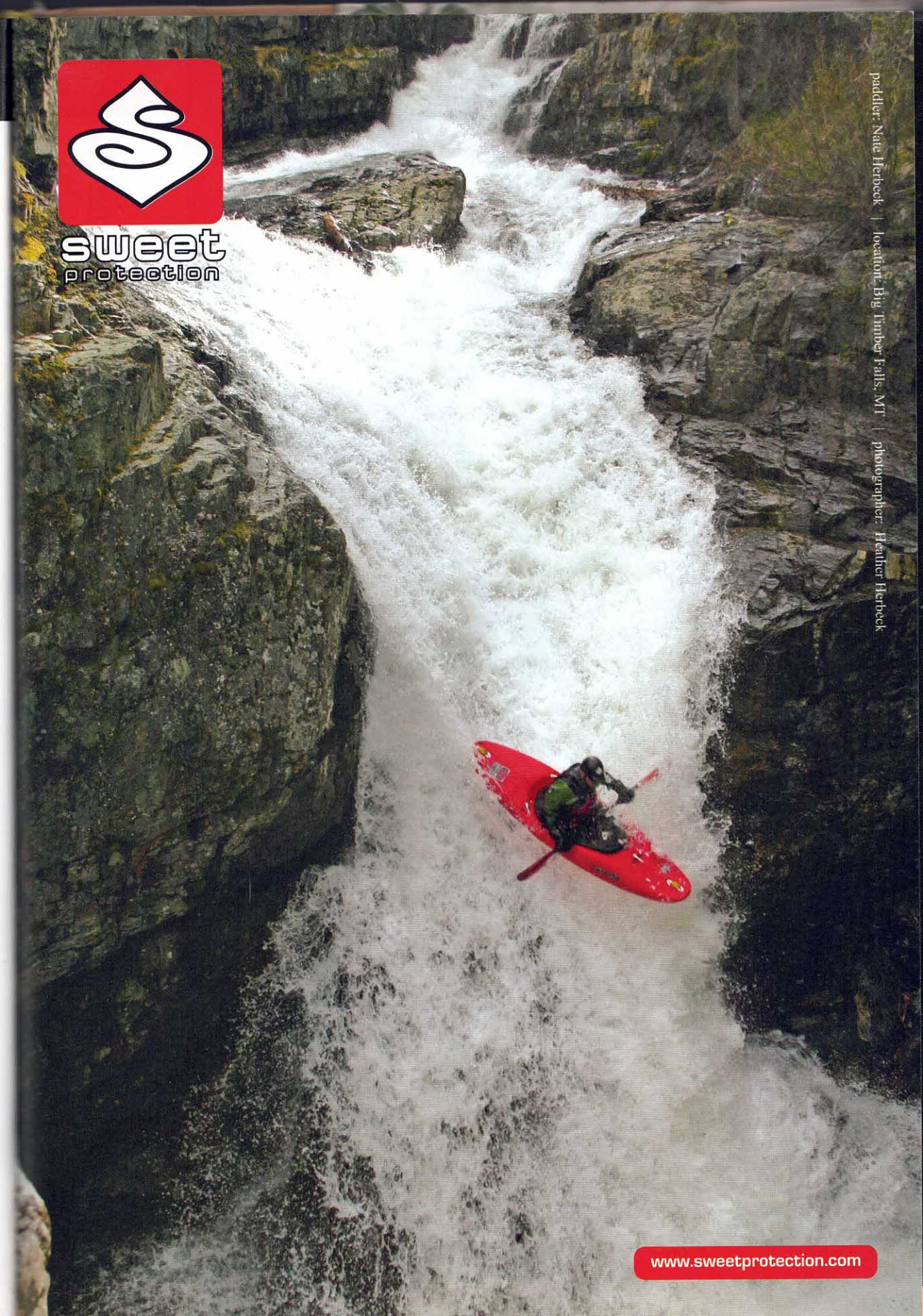
This muddy creek flows into the end of the Gunny Gorge, draining parallel to the North Fork Gunny, but with much more of a desert feel as it winds its way down the desert canyon that it forms. Most paddlers will only ever see the bottom ½ mile of this creek, where it goes cranking through a very ugly sieve, and down a 'heinous' mess of stacked boulders. However, at the headwaters of this the creek is reminiscent of an irrigation ditch, and painfully poor quality for paddling. Then things pick up, get good for a couple of corners and right when it starts to reach that optimal class V gradient, it goes Richter. This is a run that can be very tough to move around in, so plan on going in when there is very little water for your first trip. A plus to the run is that it runs earlier than most of the other runs (just slightly after Escalante season). If there were a few less miles of flat at the beginning, and a more manageable stretch at the end, then the whitewater found in between would be more worthwhile. Plan on spending a long day here.

Directions: Use the Gunnison Gorge take-out, at the Forks of the Gunnison. For the put-in, drive to Hotchkiss via Hwy 92 and turn right onto Cedar Street (Rd 34.00). Continue on this road until it crosses the creek, approximately 5 miles from town. Rd 33.00 may be useful in scouting and finding alternative put-ins to avoid the flatwater at the beginning, but it may be tough to avoid the private land here.

Level	wet rocks are okay
Class	V (P)
Quality	★
Gradient	flat, w/ 150 fpm crux
Length	10.2 (includes flat start and Gunny end)
Season	May
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Rd 34.00 bridge
Take-out	Gunnison Forks

Paonia Dam (no beta box)

Remember the old school videos that featured paddlers like Sam Drevo hauling-ass down a huge dam outflow, only to hit the bottom and explode 10 feet into the air in an unintentional kick flip? Well, the most famous of these manmade slide-to-destruction simulators is the Paonia Reservoir outflow. If you are going to run it, stretch well before putting on, think happy thoughts, ignore common sense, and don't crash and burn. Odds are that this is highly illegal, but the authorities will probably think that you are too insane to reason with or ticket. It must be a good 100' elevation drop over a pretty steep slide. I will probably never run this class NR park-and-huck.


sweet
protection
paddler: Nate Herbeck | location: Big Timber Falls, MT | photographer: Heather Herbeck
www.sweetprotection.com

Escalante Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Visual of Fin	fin very exposed	fin exposed	fin barely covered	what fin?
Character	first time creekers	still mellow	rapids juicy	inner is very big
Class	V- (P @ falls)	V- (P @ falls)	V (V+)	V (V+)
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	135 fpm upper, 200 fpm lower gorge			
Remoteness	roadside, but far from civilization			
Hitchability	good from other boaters, poor otherwise			
Length	6.5 miles			
Season	April, May (high water in a wet year on the Uncompaghre Plateau—usually two weeks)			
Gauge	visual at 57' Chevy fin rock			
Put-in	Escalante Forks			
Take-out	1/2 mile upstream of Captain Smith's Cabin			

Just about everyone that has visited Escalante canyon mentions the 400' high sandstone cliffs that enshrine the valley, and rightfully so. Located in the arid high-elevation desert of western Colorado between Grand Junction and Delta, this canyon cuts through the east face of the Uncompahgre Plateau with a remarkable display of carved sandstone, sage, cactus, juniper trees, and a magnificent little creek that drains the majority of the plateau's watershed. Perhaps my favorite memory was of an after school bolt to the canyon, when half way up the road to the take-out we rounded a bend overlooking the most beautiful sunset-lit, lush green field with the desert walls just overhead... and all the better because we were going kayaking.

The character of the run is largely dictated by the level of the river, which is entirely visual, since every gauge has either flushed away, or been modified by the large silt deposits shifted each spring (it's really muddy, always). Check the level at the 57' Chevy rapid from the large gravel pullout river left. If the large fin splitting the current is exposed it is low, if it is slightly covered it is medium, and if you can't find the fin then you are going to be very scared and/or portaging a lot. Dress warm, the water is very cold.

At low flow I tested my intermediate skills on the easy drops, learning to boof, scout, and 'creek' under the watchful eye of the Chamberlain brothers. The rapids are straightforward in the top half of the run, and all of the major drops here are portageable at river level. Leap of Faith comes first, with a constantly changing riverbed that occasionally opens up a sieve, but usually gives you an 8' left side boof into a shallow landing. Next is Water Slide, a right side chute or a center boof depending on flow. The left has a hidden sieve.

Double Drop comes at a 90 degree left bend, with a back ender hole at the top that you need to clean for the slot just below. Below here the river walls will open up a bit, and you will get about a 1/2-mile break before Rib Ripper, a typical portage at low water due to a rib breaking rock on the right. A 1/2-mile later Corkscrew, the most intimidating rapid in the upper section will appear suddenly. Watch out for bloody knuckles, and the technical runout.

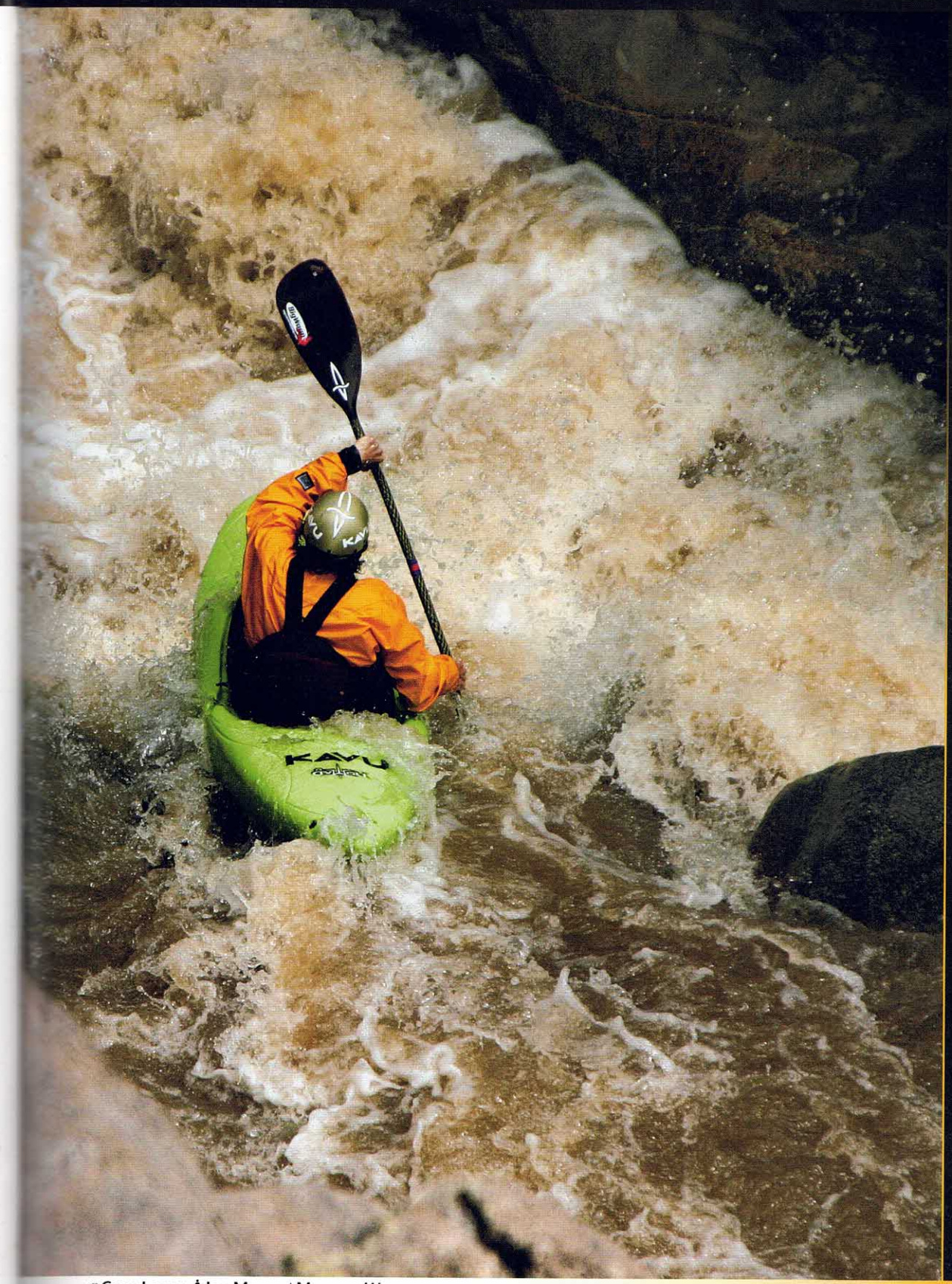
Take out a quarter mile from here if you had any problems with the upper 4.5 miles of this run, or if the flow is big and you are feeling small. As the river level rises the lines tend to stay the same, but all of the holes get powerful if the 57' fin is covered.

The lower gorge is always class V, and contains the only whitewater that is completely walled in. Don't drop into this ½ mile section unless you are feeling good. The entrance series of slides and drops are rowdy, and 57' Chevy comes up quickly after this.

Escalante Falls contains four different channels, only one

Scott McCorvey ♦valley scenery

SPRING COMES EARLY TO THE ESCALANTE VALLEY—THE PERFECT DRUG FOR PADDLERS READY TO KICK OFF A NEW SEASON WITH WARM MUDDY WATER, TOP-NOTCH CAMPING, AND A SPICE OF ADRENALINE.



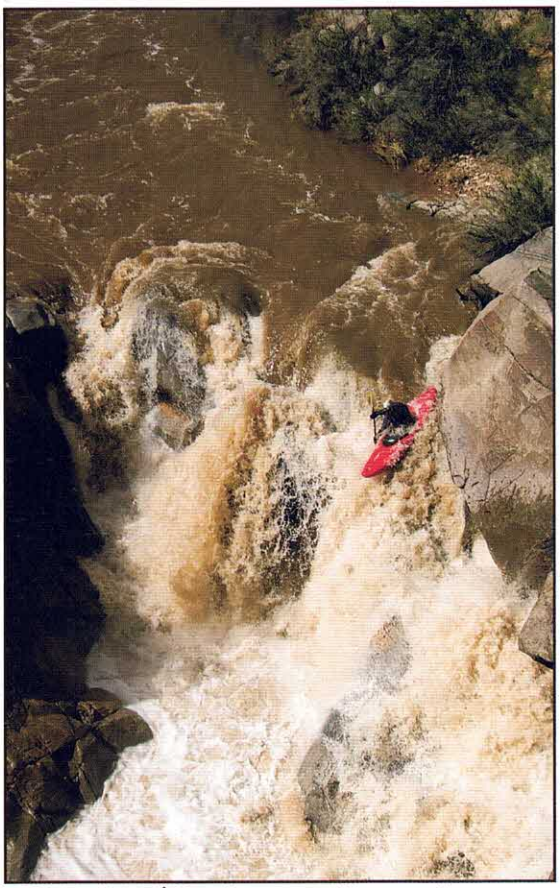
CHRIS LARSEN 🚶 JON MEYERS 💧 MAGNETIC WALL, HIGH FLOW

of which you want to run. The right two channels are death traps, and have killed recreational swimmers. The left-to-center line works, but be careful not to get bounced into the left-left cascade. Portage river right.

The exit rapid is Magnetic Wall, a blind and carved left side undercut that claims many victims. You're the magnet, and it's the fridge. The swim is mellow, and the most common swim on the river. Take out shortly below here, or trespass down stream another 1/2-mile to Smith's Cabin and get one last rapid, Breakin' the Law.

Directions

From Highway 50 turn west at the Escalante Canyon sign on to the 6.50 gravel road, about 10 miles north of Delta. Drive 11 miles (crossing the Gunnison) to Captain Smith's cabin. The legal take-out is a ½-mile up the road, turning left as soon as you reach public land, and driving down to a few cottonwoods on a knoll. Another ½ mile upstream is the gravel pullout for 57' and the rest of the inner gorge. Drive 6.5 miles upstream from the take-out through both private and public land, and then turn left immediately in front of the large, obvious ranch at the end of the road. Drive down the faint kayaker road and park. Hike down



Marcia Ready Gary Edgeworth Escalante Falls

Scott McCorvey Leif Embertson charging left of the fin, 57 Chevy

GJ Town & Nearby Floats

With warm and sunny weather almost year-round, world class mountain biking, a small ski area, and a growing population of family's and college students the Grand Valley communities are thriving. It's here that the Colorado and Gunnison rivers meet at the Grand Junction, where the town that bears the name rests. Numerous wineries and peach orchards dot the well-irrigated landscape, and the friendly hospitality of the area encourages a weekend of river float trips mixed into some sightseeing. Although there isn't anything more than a few ripples on these stretches, the streamside scenery and peacefulness of the floats make them rather enjoyable.

Lower Gunnison

At the conclusion of the Gunnison, high-elevation desert scenery borders the river, with little more than a handful of farms and roads to remind floaters of the nearby civilization that exists. The most popular stretch is from Escalante to the town of Whitewater, which passes by the mouth of Dominguez canyon—an enjoyable 30-45 minute side hike complete with a 100' falls and petroglyphs. The best camping is found near here. This run has some downfalls, including; mosquitoes, relatively poor scenery below Dominguez, overabundance of cow patties, and past vandalism issues at the take-out.

Directions: From Highway 50 turn west at the Escalante Canyon sign on to the 6.50 gravel road, about 10 miles north of Delta. Take this three miles to the bridge, where a put-in exists. Take out at the Hwy 141 bridge in the town of Whitewater, or prior to this utilizing the Bridgeport Rd.

CFS	1800<min<5k<med 10k<high
Class	II<med<II+
Quality	★★
Gradient	5 fpm
Length	26 miles
Season	March-November
Gauge	Gunny near GJ
Put-in	Escalante Canyon
Take-out	Whitewater

GJ Town Run

The scenery isn't that great here, but it is a step above Denver's South Platte. The convenience is what attracts beginners to this stretch, since numerous river access points exist. See the freestyle section to find the real action for any part of this float, and be heads up for occasional manmade influences.

Directions: For put-ins and take-outs use Hwy 6 in Palisade, 32 Road (Hwy 141) in Clifton, 5th Street bridge downtown (see freestyle directions), Hwy 340 near Redlands, and I-70's exit 15 in Loma.

CFS	10k<med<20k<high
Class	II<med<II+
Quality	★★
Gradient	5 fpm
Length	variable
Season	year round
Gauge	CO River near CO/UT stateline (or Cameo)
Riv Access	multiple options

Loma (Ruby & Horsethief Canyons)

The real gem of the GJ floats. Loma cuts through two desert canyons, Ruby and Horsethief, and contains the best scenery, side hikes, and pristine wilderness of the area (although not as scenic as Westwater). Although higher water levels make for an enjoyable day trip, the real appeal to this run are the camping options—Cottonwoods or Mee for the first of a two night trip, and the further down Blackrocks (the most popular and obvious). Cliff jumping and drunken debauchery exists for some, but the common crowd tends to be families. Combine this trip with Westwater for a multi-day desert experience.

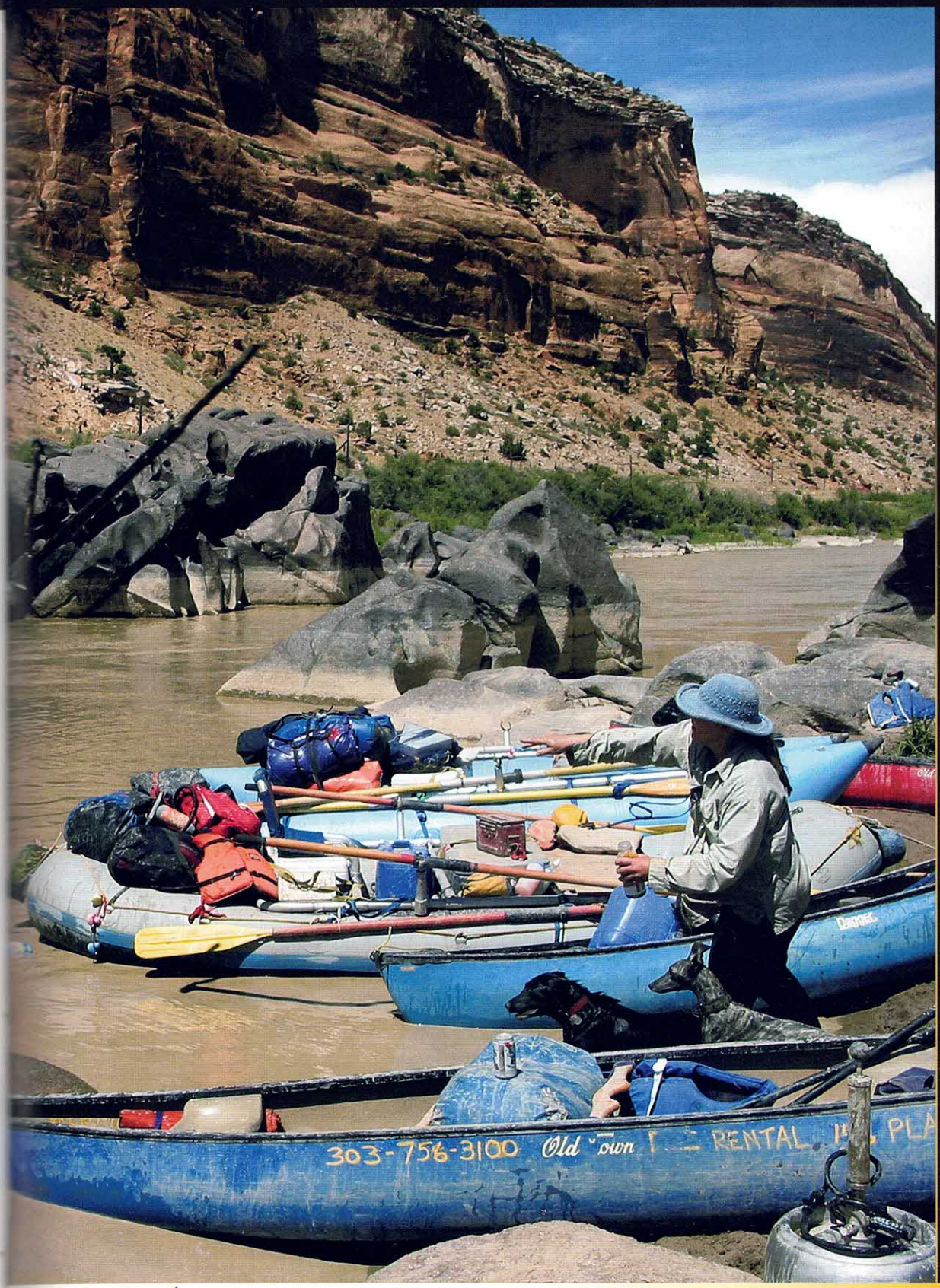
Shuttle: Rimrock Rafting in Fruita provides a shuttle service for $75. They may be reached at 970-260-5848.

Directions: Use the Loma Exit (#15) off of I-70 to reach the BLM boat ramp at the put-in. Take out at the Westwater Launch, found in Utah off of I-70 at the self-named exit.

CFS	1800<min<10k<med 20k<high
Class	II+<15k<III-
Quality	★★★
Gradient	5 fpm
Length	25 miles
Season	year round (w/o ice)
Gauge	CO River near CO/UT stateline (or Cameo)
Put-in	Loma Exit
Take-out	Westwater Launch

KM ♦CANOEISTS SURVIVING THE JUNCTION HEAT, TOWN FLOAT

THE COLORADO AND GUNNISON RIVERS ARE MELLOW WHERE THEY JOIN IN THE GRAND VALLEY, ALLOWING BEGINNER FLOAT TRIPS FOR EVEN THE MOST INEXPERIENCED RIVER RATS.



West Slope • GJ Town & Nearby Floats

ALEX HENES CAROL CADY BLACK ROCKS, LOMA

5th Street Wave

When it's in, then it's the best of the Junction freestyle scene (not including Big Sur, which still isn't running). The feature changes in many ways, but is generally some form of wave or wave-hole. Clean spins and small blunts were the moves one year, and loops and cartwheels the next. Night sessions are even possible here, but I wouldn't go solo since there is usually a homeless camp directly next to this feature. Although the gauge helps, the feature is primarily visible, since the quality is affected by the flow on the Colorado and the Gunnison. The feature is on the Colorado, a mere 50 yards upstream of the confluence. If the Gunnison isn't high enough to back up the feature, then it could be a flush regardless of the Colorado's flow. Fortunately, it seems to run yearly for at least a few weeks.

Directions: Take 5th Street (Hwy 50 from downtown) south across the river, and turn right at the sketchy liquor store. Drive behind the liquor store, turn right passing through the junkyard, and down to the point. I doubt it's public access, but it tends to be safe and okay. The feature is visible from the active railroad bridge. We once crossed in the headlights of a parked train engine after a night session.

CFS	9000<optimal w/good flow on Gunny
Class	III+
Eddy	very good
Quality	★★★★ (variable)
Season	May, June
Gauge	Colorado near Cameo
Riv Access	5th Street bridge knoll

Silo Hole (aka The Boiler)

Located in a side channel of the Colorado River through the GJ town stretch, this feature is pleasantly good with ample water, and dangerously shallow. It's not so much that it's shallow, it's what makes it shallow—a cluster of broken concrete and exposed rebar. Although I've played in it at lower levels, and it was still okay, the sharp manmade river bottom did a wonder on my boat. When it gets higher the feature is decidedly better, but becomes an expert only place on the surfer's right pocket, which is where the best eddy access is located. Stick to surfer's left if unsure, and keep gear and body parts off the bottom. Basic wave moves are easiest, and hole moves are good if thrown shallow.

CFS	sticky<17000<optimal
Class	IV-
Eddy	good
Quality	★★★
Season	May, June (peak)
Gauge	Colorado near Cameo
Put-in	near Concrete Plant
Take-out	same, or rec area

Directions: Take Broadway southwest, cross the river, and take the first right onto Power Rd. Drive a mile plus until you pass a gravel pit on the left. The wave is ¼ mile further on the right. Take a quick walk to find the side channel. There is a recreation area at the end of the road, which offers another good access point for town floats.

Alisa Paine Chad Thatcher & Josh Heise 5th Street

Although only a handful of features exist, the amount of water that runs through each year is enough to create the goods from time to time.

Josh Heise Brett Taylor & Ben Hauschulz the top feature is a clean spin machine, 5th Street

Lucky 7

This is probably not legal, but the people who have the jurisdiction to do something about it seem content just watching us play this feature, which is located and formed at/in the Cameo Roller Dam. After getting shut-down for paddling the tail end of a construction pipe in Plateau Creek, we set off to just look at Big Sur lake and dream of better days, when we spotted water coming out of the seventh gate over on the Cameo Dam. Bored and desperate we paddled over to check it out.

What we found was a 7' high green wave that we could surf three across, spin the hell out of, and attempt our feeble blunts. Although I haven't been lucky enough to catch it with that much flow again, there is always some sort of feature when the seventh gate is open (and the rest are usually closed)—usually a shallow and fun wave hole. The gate is most likely to be open in the late fall and very early spring, I believe mostly for flushing out the silt. DO NOT paddle into it from the upstream side, as sometimes the 'roller' can be very low to the water. Also note that now it appears to be the sixth gate over, since the first was transformed into a fish ladder, but its still called the Lucky 7. If Big Sur were in, then this would be a suicide channel.

CFS	open roller<10000
Class	III-
Eddy	lake
Quality	★★★
Season	near winter, unnatural
Gauge	Cameo roller gate up
Riv Access	Cameo Dam

Directions: Park roadside to I-70 just above the Cameo Dam, and next to the Exit 49 sign. If the roller is up, then put in at the base and paddle across.

Brook Aitken Lyle Phetteplace an extinct surf at Lucky #1, Lucky #7 on the far side

Feeling the Presence of God, In a Kayak

By Fred Zacherl

One day in late August, I found myself donning my kayaking gear just above the opening rapids of Gore Canyon. Driving rain was coming in from the east and I was completely alone. This was not the first time I have soloed Gore, nor would it be my last. This time however, I would see things I had never seen before. This time I would be reminded of a faith that I have held since I began exploring the world outside of civilization.

After racing to get dressed and into my boat, time seemed to slow down. When I am solo, clearing my mind and being present in the moment is what I always focus on during the series of moves before the first major rapid, Applesauce. At Applesauce I always self-evaluate my mental and physical preparedness as I paddle through the drop. I am never sure if I evaluate myself correctly, since I have never turned around and walked out. I lend little credit to any evaluation that I have not failed. I only began to give class V the respect it deserves after I completely failed at it.

After a "par for the course" run of Applesauce, I continued down to Gore Rapid. I hardly ever scout anything when I am soloing, not because I believe that somehow I am better than that, but because if the end is going to come, it will more than likely come during a relatively simple move in a relatively simple spot.

This time, as with every other time I have soloed or hand paddled Gore, I elected to take the sneak. Making my way to the slot, I became aware of the growing storm in the heavens above me. Clouds darkened the sky and I heard the first rumbles of thunder off in the distance. As I pulled into the third, of my standard set of four eddies in Gore Rapid, I was blasted in the face with a strong gust of wind driven rain. This combined with the steadily dropping temperature refocused my attention on the task at hand.

I continued to paddle hard down the canyon. As I made my way through the boogie water the storm was all around me, blurring the difference between the water on the river and in the air. Then, as if the controls were handed over to a crazed conductor, a violent clash of wind, rain and lightening began directly overhead. Individual bolts struck between the clouds.

Before I was really ready I was above Tunnel Rapid. Some of my favorite rapids had gone by unnoticed and I was now faced with the second serious challenge of the canyon. As I sat in the eddy the rain kicked up a notch. I cleared my mind and breathed in deep to slow my pounding heart. Everything in kayaking gets its volume turned up when you are solo.

As I paddled for the lip, I focused my attention completely, and in that moment I was clear in my intention. As I lined up the last two strokes, a light as pure as anything I have ever seen brightened the canyon around me. A nano-second later a deafening boom echoed between the canyon walls. So loud that later I was struck wondering why I could still feel it reverberating in my boat. For a brief moment I saw the world in complete tunnel vision—a response from my brain to the sensory over-load from the lightning and my total focus on the complex drop beneath me. I launched off the lip of the falls and in an instant I was shot out of the drop's base.

In the pool below, my tunnel vision disappeared as fast as it arrived. I took a couple of seconds to marvel at the canyon surrounding me. A lightning bolt must have struck the canyon somewhere above me. I was now in the heart of everything—the canyon, the rapids, the rain, and the total power of nature. I have paddled Gore Canyon for many years, yet I had never experienced it like this. In a strange way it reminded me of my one year old son, throwing a fit when he doesn't get his way with something he wants.

I am not one to believe in the common definition of God. I believe in little I cannot scientifically prove or personally experience, a dysfunction of my engineer's mind. I think on some level many people need to believe that there is someone watching out for them, or that there is some master director of our entire world. I think that God might be a creation in our own minds meant to fill a psychological void we developed in our evolution.

If there is something like God, then it exists not as an omnipotent being controlling the universe, but as every part of that universe, from the smallest atomic particle to the vast expanses of space. To me he is nature and the inherent power—the crushing avalanche, the flooding tsunami, the bowel-shaking earthquake. The pure quiet of a midnight snowstorm, and the soft warm breeze of a summer sunset.

When I felt the rain, the wind, the lightning, and the river itself I felt touched by the presence of something greater. I have experienced so much during my misadventures in life, but nothing moves me more then the power of being alone in the natural world. I feel lucky to be able to find my God on the river. These rivers are my temple, and I worship in them.

The Legend of Big Sur

CFS	18000 min 24k+ optimal
Class	IV-
Quality	★★★★★ ?
Length	one feature
Season	peak of really big year
Gauge	Colorado at Cameo
Riv Access	one exit east of exit 49

Assuming that I can write an accurate and updated description about a park and play spot that hasn't run (and I mean really run) since 1997 is ludicrous. Sure, a select few made it out there at 18,000 cfs a few years ago, but that doesn't really do justice to this Colorado wave of mammoth proportions.

As a fourteen year old kid I can remember getting out there at flows of about 24,000 cfs in my top of the line 9'+ Perception Super Sport and 'carving' back and forth for 30 minute rides plus. I can even remember doing my first '360s' although admittedly it was more like four 90s in the displacement hulls. And, the surfers left side was especially cool because when I timed it right I could carve down the steep face to the outside edge where boils from the eddy above would form into the trough of the wave, allowing me to bounce that Super Sport, getting a spectacular four inches of air, with no imagination that years later we would be performing tricks like Blunts, Pan Ams, Helixes, and all of that other stuff. Best of all I remember cruising out there side by side with my dad and friends, day or night, and just surfing.

Big Sur is located a ½ mile upstream of the Cameo Dam, along I-70 about 20 minutes

...THE SURFERS LEFT SIDE WAS ESPECIALLY COOL BECAUSE I COULD CARVE DOWN THE STEEP FACE TO THE OUTSIDE EDGE WHERE BOILS WOULD FORM INTO THE TROUGH OF THE WAVE, ALLOWING ME TO BOUNCE...

east of Grand Junction. An artificial riverbed, leftover from a former roller dam structure, forms the perfectly symmetrical wave. There would always be a feature at almost any level if the Cameo Dam gates were to be opened, but they rarely open them during spring and summer runoff, until the river reaches 18,000 cfs. At these low levels the front wave is probably too green for most modern freestyle kayaks, but the surfers left of the second wave will form a fun pocket.

When the river reaches 24,000 cfs the front wave steepens' enough to form some backwash, although it is still a somewhat flat wave. I think spins will be good, and maybe blunts, but who knows. The higher it gets the bigger, and I think the better. With the modern freestyle boats it will either be too flat of a wave, and the former splendor of this freestyle Mecca will be lost. Or, we will be throwing massive aerials on the surfers left side, possibly some of the biggest to be found anywhere in this book. Until then, we shall see.

Directions: If headed EB I-70 from Junction, pull over at the exit immediately *after* Exit 49. It's an unmarked road just before the Debeque Canyon tunnel. If driving WB I-70 then U-turn from exit 49 by driving up the canyon a mile. Park after the signs and walk along the sidewalk downstream to the wave. When leaving follow the road out, and either continue heading EB, or U turn through an emergency vehicle turnaround (the 2nd one is safer). The only other option to head back to Junction is to drive 30 something miles out of the way for the next exit, or risk a federal offense by driving on the sidewalk.

LEE MCCUTCHEN ♦ JUNE 18, 1995—29,600 CFS

Plateau Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	300	450	700	1000
Character	first timer friendly	still mellow	mediocre play	play is better
Class	II+	III-	III	III (IV- x2)
Quality	★	★★★	★★★	★★★★
Gradient	35 fpm			
Remoteness	roadside			
Hitchability	good			
Length	8.3, and variable			
Season	late April, May, early June			
Gauge	Plateau Creek near Cameo			
Put-in	mm 53			
Take-out	near canyon mouth, Hwy 65			

Plateau Creek is a fantastic stretch for inexperienced kayakers because the river is relatively slow moving, has plenty of places to easily get out, and contains well-spaced boulders that create more interesting features than the rest of the Grand Valley floats. Draining the west slope of the Grand Mesa, the largest creek sits parallel to Hwy 65 in the largest canyon—creating easy access to the most water.

What would be a meandering stream gets choked up with large boulders that divide the flow and create well-defined and mellow features, a learners dream. Only two spots in the entire 8.3 miles ever contain whitewater over class III- at normal flows—the last ½ mile the most prominent, and the short section above the racecourse. Thus the run is commonly divided at this halfway point into the Upper and Lower, but running both in a day is rather enjoyable.

Upper

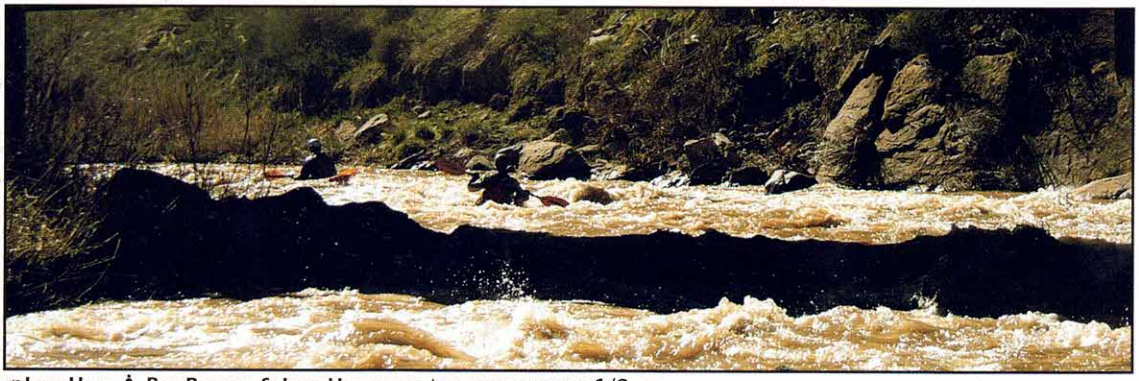
Starting at the top, near mm 53, offers the more exciting class III with a little bit more of a continuous feel. At high flows the best play on the run is found here, with a handful of small ledge holes, deep eddy lines, and occasional rock moves. Be heads up at a private bridge trestle that easily collects wood. The end of this section steepens for a shallow straightaway next to the road, and continues into the racecourse site marked by a house sized boulder on river left and a huge pullout and cottonwood tree on the right. Fun eddies in here, and the end of the best action.

Lower

Starting at the racecourse is the best way to get the easiest whitewater of Plateau. A few big rocks and tiny features up the excitement level, but avoiding everything is easy. Take out at the Hwy 65 bridge, a ½ mile up from the bottom if desiring mellowness. The last ½ mile is the fastest rapid of the river, and slightly more technical with a few small ledges and center-left hole at the take-out.

Directions

Jump on Hwy 65 from I-70 east of GJ (exit 49) and park at the river for the lowest take-out. Half a mile up is a bridge for the mellow take-out. Approximately 3 miles up is the racecourse pullout on the right (look for the huge cottonwood with a big dirt lot, not my mileage). At 8.1 miles is a put-in from the road, and the highest point I recommend. From the second Hwy 65 bridge to Collbran is a featureless river with fences.



Josh Heise Ben Raevsky & Jesse Houghton entering the last 1/2 mile

THE MOST QUALITY BEGINNER FARE NEAR THE GRAND VALLEY. A MEANDERING STREAM GETS CHOKED UP WITH BOULDERS JUST ENOUGH TO CREATE FRIENDLY FEATURES. IT'S PRETTY TOO.

📷 JOSH HEISE 🚶 BARRY CHAMBERLAIN, BEN RAEVSKY, & JESSE HOUGHTON 💧 BUZZARD CREEK

Kannah Creek

The original upper and lower Kannah Creek that were listed in CRC2 are no longer. For a few years in the late nineties the annual high water blew out all but a handful of fences, but lower water years have since seen numerous barbed wire fences strung across what was already a B-level run to begin with. There is a limited section of class V whitewater opportunity available as a hike-to option above the private land. I've run from one-mile up, but the adventurous may find more boulder garden mank upstream to test their class V skills. The word fast is an understatement to this run, and pre-scouting the continuous rapid and few eddies is mandatory. Last run I caught four eddies, two of which were mandatory.

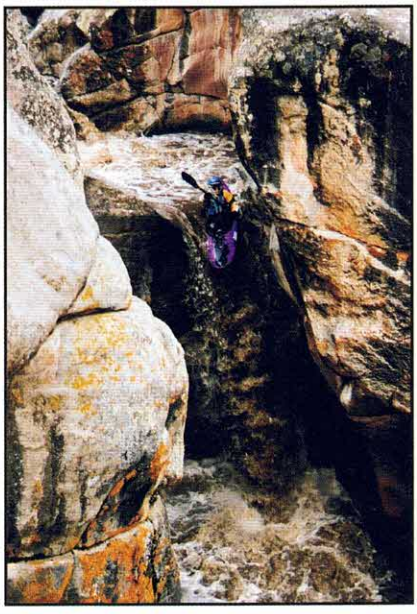
Directions: Turn east onto Lands End Road (FS 00) from Hwy 50, near Whitewater. Drive three miles, turn right twice onto GS.00 Rd, and drive another seven miles to a picnic area to scout the run. If a descent is a go, start hiking at the Kannah Creek Trailhead just downstream of the picnic area.

CFS	150<optimal<300
Class	V+
Quality	★★
Gradient	400 fpm
Length	1 mile
Season	May, early June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Kannah Creek Trail
Take-out	picnic area

Glade Park Potholes (no beta box)

For the vertically attracted the Glade Park Potholes is the best park-and-huck near the Grand Valley (okay, the only one that isn't manmade). It's usually not all that worth it though, because time spent here is time not spent on Escalante Creek, which is the best indicator of the flow. When Escalante is high to very high the flow on Little Dolores Creek should be adequate for the Potholes. The 100' long stretch contains an 8' vert, a big pool, and then an 18' vert with an uncomfortably close cliff wall on the left. Use caution. The cliff jumping here is popular with the locals, and the cause of occasional injuries and deaths. Don't even think about running any section of Little Dolores Creek, not even the section into Westwater. It's not worth it. The 6'4 rancher warned us to never come back. He may warn you with a Desert Eagle.

Directions: Take Rim Rock Drive southwest from Grand Junction to the top of the canyon rim, then turn left onto DS.00 Rd where there are signs to Glade Park. Continue on DS.00 through Glade Park, and turn left in 6.7 miles onto 9.8 Rd. In about 2.5 miles turn right into the parking area, and hike down to the falls. Tell the Colorado Nat'l Monument ranger collecting fees that you are going to the Glade Park Potholes and the park entrance fee to drive Rim Rock Drive will be waived.



Buzzard Creek

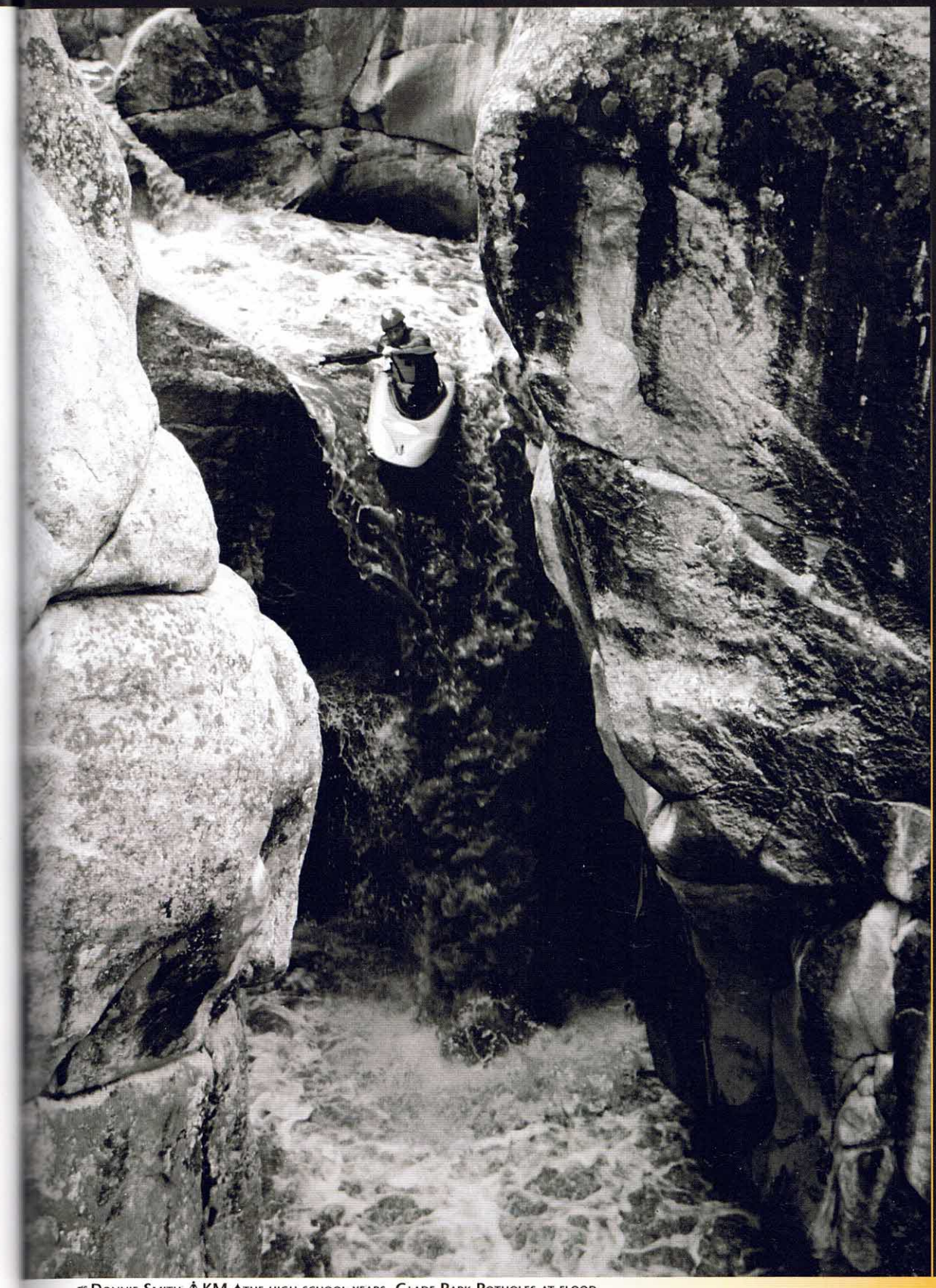
Buzzard Creek is the main tributary that flows into Plateau Creek, near Collbran. Once Escalante Creek has dried up, it offers the best afterwork action for area creek boaters, but don't go out of your way to catch this mank-fest. The boulder garden rapids are slightly better than other area runs, making Buzzard actually worth paddling when it has adequate flow. Avoid the constant influx of trees, seasonal fences and cables, and other ranching related debris (which should not be removed, since the entire run is on private land) and only paddle this run when it has adequate flow (which is rare).

The other main tributary is the class V- Leon Creek, which has been run south of Vega Reservoir. Use FR 280/262 for sketchy 4WD access to this three-mile stretch ending at Silver Spruce Trail.

Directions: From Collbran, take 330E Rd east for six miles, and turn left on 64.30 Rd where a bridge serves as a put-in. Take out in Collbran.

CFS	300<optimal<600
Class	IV
Quality	★★
Gradient	145 fpm
Length	7 miles
Season	May (Peak)
Gauge	visual, or when Plateau is 500+
Put-in	64.3 Road
Take-out	Collbran

KM Donnie Smith the Potholes—don't dive



West Slope • GJ Afterwork Mank & Huck

Donnie Smith KM the high school years, Glade Park Potholes at flood

Wind River Range

ES ♦ TYPICAL WY ACCESS, DAY ONE OF FIVE—BULL LAKE CREEK

Popo Agie

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Visual CFS	160	200	350	500
Sister Gauge	150	180	300	430
Character	falls run only	sinks bony still	falls run stout	both runs stout
Class	V+ (NRs)	V+ (NRs)	V+ (NRs)	NR
Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★
Gradient	410 fpm Falls Run, 225 fpm Sinks Run			
Remoteness	accessible... for Wyoming, trail & road parallel to run			
Hitchability	good on road, bad on trail			
Length	1.7 miles Falls Run, 2.7 miles Sinks Run			
Season	May to July			
Gauge	Middle Fork Popo Agie near Lander, National Weather Service (not on USGS)			
Put-in	Popo Agie Falls trailhead or below falls			
Take-out	Above Sink			

When imagining the characteristics of a good candidate for a pleasant class V creek run, the first thing that usually doesn't come to my mind are sinks. And I don't mean kitchen sinks either. I'm talking about places where whole rivers go underground and then "spring" up again somewhere not so nearby. The Popo Agie (commonly pronounced incorrectly) drops precipitously through a magnificent valley before turning head down and cascading into one of these exact sinks. In fact, the take-out for the roadside run is directly above this fascinating piece of geologic history—a true must make eddy. Despite the terrifyingly beautiful river-cave, the Popo Agie is holding big time, and we know this thanks to the exploration by Oly Koehler, Mick Hopkinson and Jim Curzon.

Falls Run

By strapping your kayak to your back for a beautiful two-mile streamside hike you can claim an excellent but dangerous granite run that Todd G describes as, "what boating in Rocky Mountain National Park would be like if RMNP had good boating." A strange but deadly accurate assessment for the character of this high elevation run. Higher and lower put-ins exist and I will leave it up to you to decide where you feel comfortable entering this maelstrom of rock and falling water. You want to hike at least 1.5 miles upstream, where the trail begins to climb away from the river. There is a quality waterfall not visible from the trail in this area. You can continue up looking for runnable sections, but you will likely end up with a paddle to portage ratio around 50%. At certain water levels it will be worth it and others it may not.

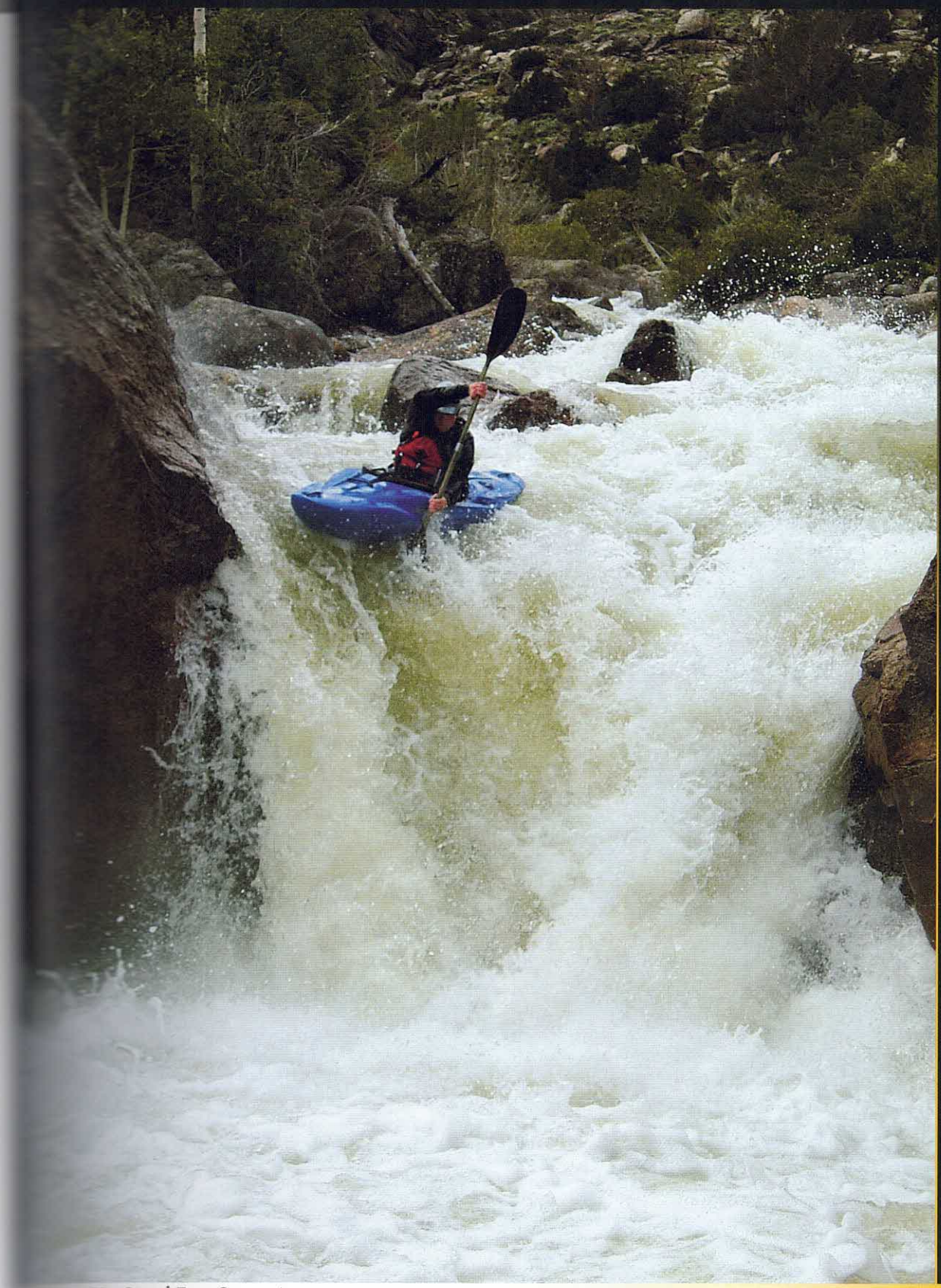
Regardless of where you put in you will encounter a myriad of continuous and stompy whitewater, where long scouts are usually the only way to ensure a safe eddy above some even steeper and stompier drops. There are definitely some portage candidates and different rapids may go better with less or more flow. The character of this run demands a very competent crew and a fair bit of lengthy river analyses. For all of its effort this is a run well worth the trip. If the water is high and you still have energy, continue down through the roadside run for a cool-down of sorts with more excellent rapids and scenery. Consider lapping this stretch once you know the lines.

Sinks Run

Start by scouting your take-out eddy, located comfortably above the cascade that plummets directly underground. After finding your exit, begin your descent at the Popo Agie Falls trailhead. You have a short stretch to practice your strokes before you enter into a maze of steep and technical whitewater, reminiscent of the Saint Vrain drainages in Colorado. At low to moderate water levels this entire run can be boat scouted by advanced paddlers but, as always, caution should be exercised due to the strong possibilities of heavy lumber buildup in the continuous and tricky whitewater that make up this entire section. At high water this is a very wild ride. Scouting many of the drops, especially those in the last mile, will most likely lead to a safer run at medium and high flows.

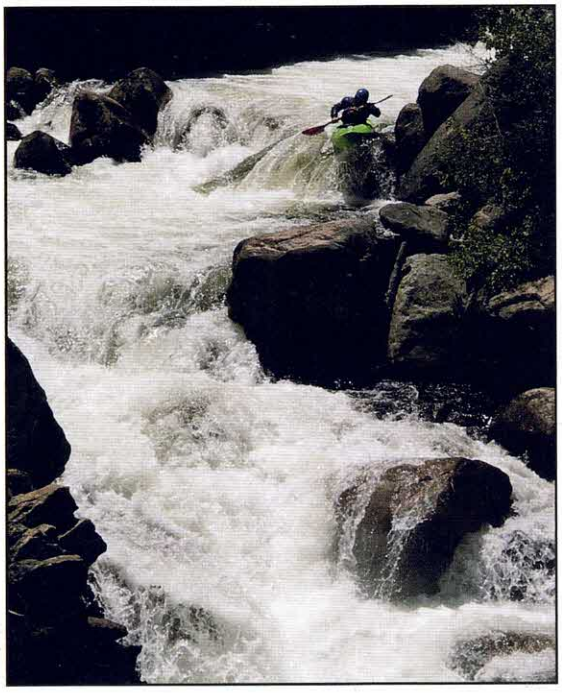
Directions

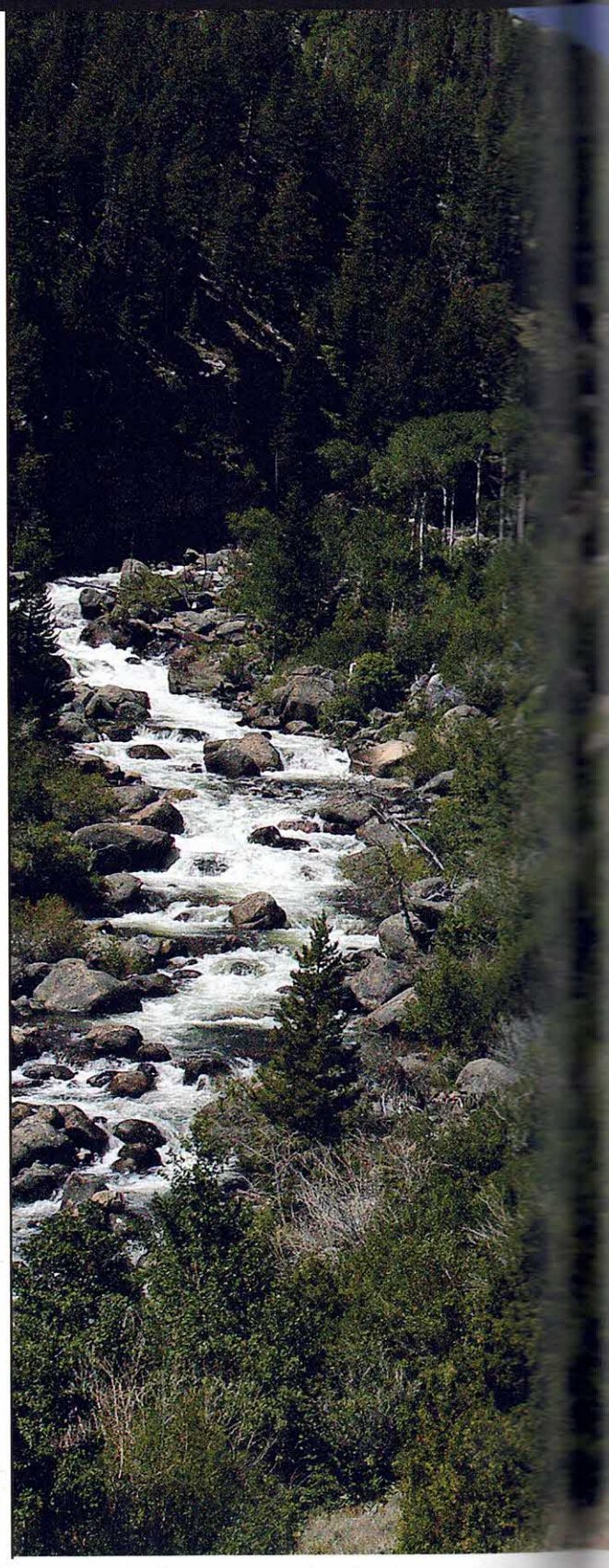
To get to the take-out for the Sinks Run from Main St. Lander (Hwy 287) follow the signage west on 5th St out of town to Fremont St which turns into Sinks Canyon Rd and takes you to the State Park. Find the visitor center, the "sink" and a take-out eddy somewhere upstream. Check out the "rise" trout pool along the way. To reach the put-in for the Sinks Run or the take-out and hike-in for the upper run, continue on Sinks Canyon Rd to the Popo Agie Falls trailhead.



High quality and stacked boulder garden rapids on the most accessible river in the Winds—which still requires a hike.

Ned Stitt Todd Gillman quality ten footer





North Fork Popo Agie (no beta box)

Below Dickinson Park a three mile trail leads to the North Fork Popo Agie. From there the river drops a spectacular 2,222 feet in 8 miles (280 fpm) through a series of rapids, falls, canyons and cascades. There are many great drops to run, however, there are also many arduous portages and the river often strangely fans out into very bony sections. While more water would improve this situation there are several tight spots where the whitewater is good and more water is not desirable.

When we paddled the North Fork we had planned on a two day mission but at the put-in one of our party members convinced us that we could do it in a day. That was a big mistake. While the hike in is easy we were forced to bivouac after moving downstream constantly for 11 hours. That evening we hungrily eyed eddies teaming with trout but sans fishing pole we had to paddle out the next day on empty stomachs. Properly equipped for a night out this is a quality run. After peak in late June or early July is the time to explore this area.

Directions: To reach the put-in follow Trout Creek Rd out of Fort Washakie to Dickinson Park and hike down TR 710 to the river. To reach the take-out drive south on Hwy 287 from Fort Washakie to Milford and turn west onto Milford Rd (Rd 139). In about 5.5 miles turn right and cross the North Fork. Continue another 2 miles and turn left–follow the road to the river. There is mostly private land here so be careful where you park and access the river.

-Aaron Pruzan

Winds • Popo Agie

ES Brad Higinbotham looking up at the lower put-in

Bull Lake Creek

Winds • Bull Lake Creek

ES Evan Ross stomp or get stomped

Bull Lake Creek

CFS	500<optimal<550
Class	V+ (NRs, Ps)
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	245 fpm, 396 crux
Length	20 mile hike, 18 miles river, 9 miles reservoir
Season	last two weeks of July
Gauge	BLC @ Bull Lake Res
Put-in	just below the heavens
Take-out	Bull Lake Reservoir

I've survived the brutal shuttle of the Brazos, stumbled through the Green Monster Portage of The Box, crawled through the poison ivy fields of the Black, and escaped the detection of reservation rangers on a southwest stash—yet all of these experiences combined wouldn't compare to the torturous terrain and terrifying whitewater of Bull Lake Creek. If you haven't run a few of these gorges, or something of similar difficulty and commitment outside of the Southern Rockies, then commence self-support, V+ training. The east face of the Wind River Range is rugged enough to keep all but the most hardened explorers out of the area, and the place is truly the most pristine environment I've ever immersed myself in. Bring the bear spray and kayak-pack.

This is the most difficult kayaking expedition covered in this guide. It's also the most amazing trip I have completed. At the time of writing, only seven kayakers have experienced this five-day self-support trip. If it wasn't for the fact that one of the members from the first descent was willing to do it again, I would have never believed that the 20-mile hike over two mountain passes would be worth it. It's worth every blister-tearing step.

A reservation-issue fishing license will grant access to the area, but the legitimacy of whitewater kayaks being a form of travel, as opposed to an illegal recreational sport is in question. This land is sacred to the Eastern Shoshone Tribe who inhabit the Wind River Indian Reservation. It is sacred to us as well. Please respect this place and the Shoshone Tribe by using leave-no-trace principles, limiting your approach to the trail described, and by purchasing fishing licenses if you choose to go.

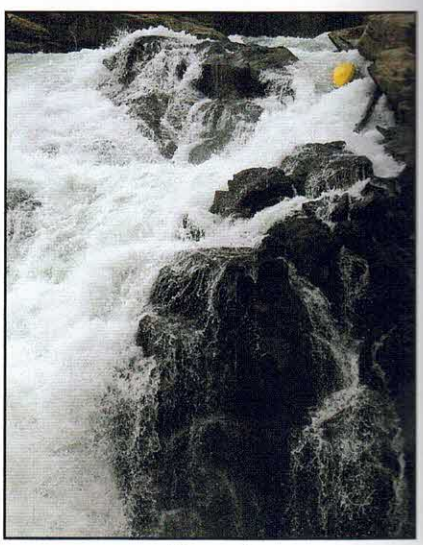
When you go to buy your fishing license at the nearby general store, leave your boats at camp and not on the truck. It's a good idea to have your shuttle vehicles already packed before you get to the area. Leave enough time to get the licenses and drive to the put-in, since day one will involve eight-hours of hiking with a loaded boat. Day two consists of more hiking, but the scenery is breathtaking as the trail meanders past high-alpine lakes. The only people we encountered were the direct descendents of the Gore-Tex family on a backpacking trip, there to pick up a scroll that had been kept deep in the Winds by the founders—a sort of time capsule of product testing backpacking trips and associated memories of wilderness survival. Try not to roll your ankle as you drop down to Deadman Lake, and camp two, near the headwaters of the South Fork. Day three is the start of the actual kayaking—sort of.

The South Fork is not what you came for. It starts with a number of lakes, and then things narrow down into a micro-gorge. This section would be awesome with adequate water, but the rest of the run would likely be much too high. Portaging around the final section of the South Fork micro-gorge leads to an awe-inspiring confluence, where the Middle Fork cascades down from the Continental Divide. Paddle the run-out, and then get out river left to scout a NR set of seven gorged falls. All except one of the falls are clean, but extremely powerful looking holes and an ugly fourth drop deterred our group from entering. A most amazing gorge to witness, but the first quality, runnable whitewater is downstream.

Boulder garden drops with bedrock slides welcome the weary kayaker. It's five-star paddling and the section ends with a spectacular 20' falls. Scout river-left, and note the sticky hole at the exit of this small gorge. Good camping can be found on river right, but it's better to go further. A horizon line marks the start of the Lakes Section.

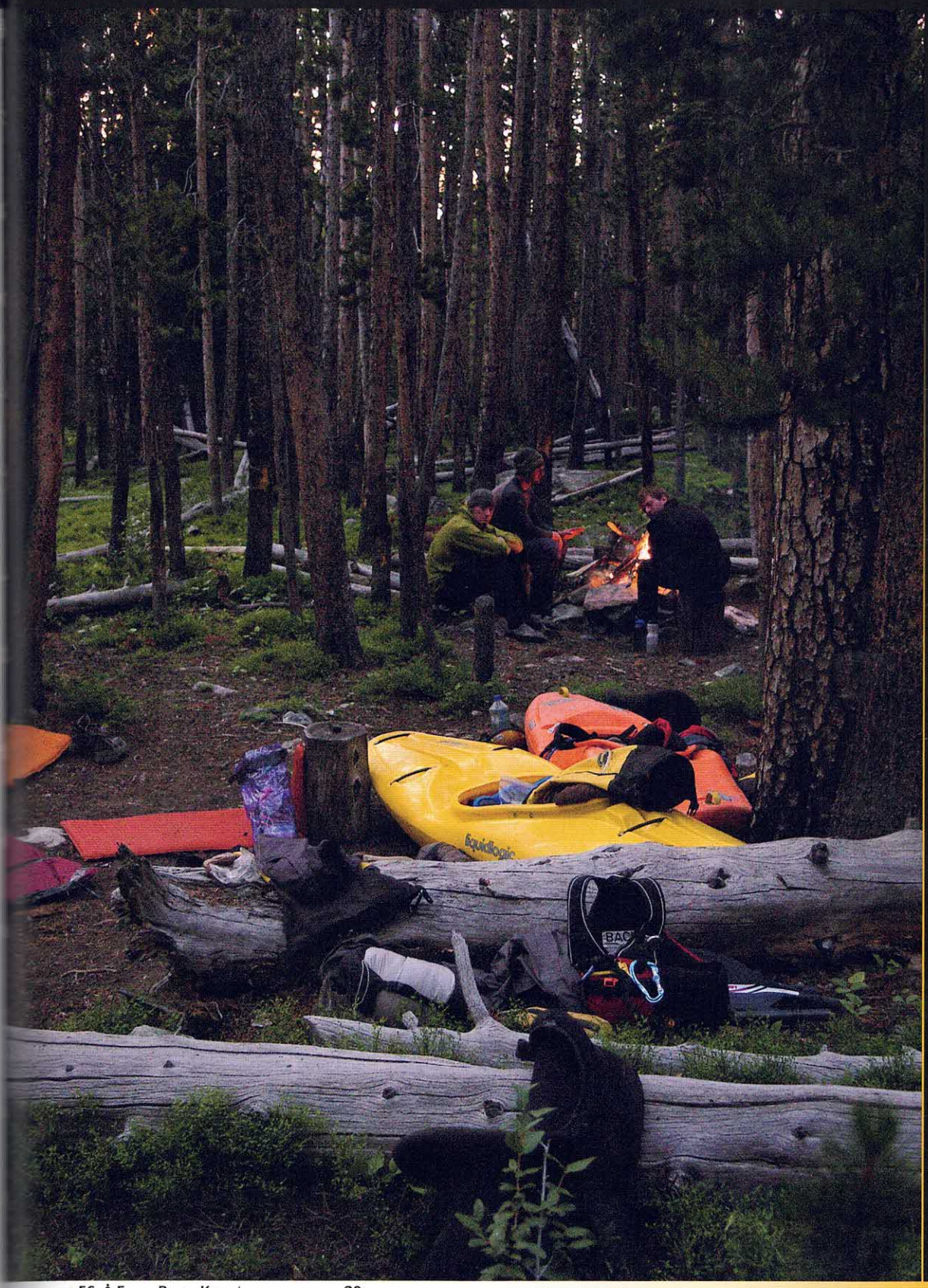
Unlike most 300-yard lakes, these have a beautiful ledge drop between each of them. Plan to camp somewhere in the Lakes Section on day three. If you can, paddle all the way to Haagen Dazen—a monstrous granite falls with a seriously tricky entrance that has only been attempted once. It's a stunning place swarming with small-to-medium sized Brown and Rainbow Trout. Words can't describe the intensity of green in this meditative environment of epic proportions. The mosquitoes love it too, so pack extra repellent.

Paddling out of the lake below Haagen Dazen, the river enters an anomaly that I have never seen—a downstream fork in the river marking the entrance to Forked Tongue Gorge. The right gorge contains most of the water, and drops into complete suicide. If you have the time, take a look at the power



KM 🚶 Brad Higinbotham 💧 first and only attempt of Haagen Dazen from the top

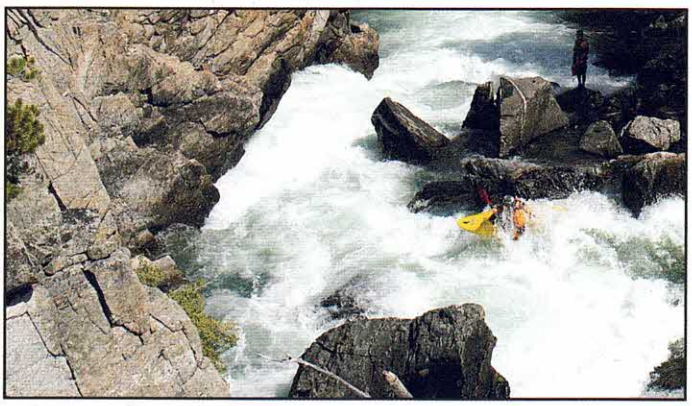
IF IT WASN'T FOR THE FACT THAT ONE OF THE MEMBERS FROM THE FIRST DESCENT WAS WILLING TO DO IT AGAIN, I WOULD HAVE NEVER BELIEVED THAT THE 20-MILE HIKE OVER TWO MOUNTAIN PASSES WOULD BE WORTH IT.



ES EVAN, BRAD, KYLE THE END OF THE 20-MILE HIKE, DAY TWO CAMP

of this place from river right. Otherwise, paddle and portage through the 150 cfs of the left gorge. The peel-out below the end of this mank has an Upper South Boulder feel, only with fully-loaded boats.

The Forked Tongue Gorge continues with pushy creeking and just enough eddies to keep things manageable. Pick your way down the next two miles of V+ action, avoiding holes by stomping boofs. It was here my adrenaline levels maxed out, and a short walk through the woods was the only way to clear my head. The intensity of the place was surreal. Eddy-hopping will lead paddlers through the top half of the gorge, but the action is stout. This place would be suicidal at high flows and likely easier with less water.



The crux finale of the Forked Tongue Gorge is an S-Turn move between a few big holes, avoiding the left wall that the river slams into. Paddlers can run this, and then have the option of just portaging the last drop river right. Others will want to walk both drops via a rough portage on the left. The last drop is a freak of power. Big-water-style waves stack and crank downstream at a 20-degree angle before pouring into a river wide hole. The backwash sucks from 45' out, with perfectly flat aeration—a hydraulic that makes the Big South's Double Trouble look like a play hole. Paddlers who run it can find salvation in the river left eddy. This is one of the heaviest drops on the run.

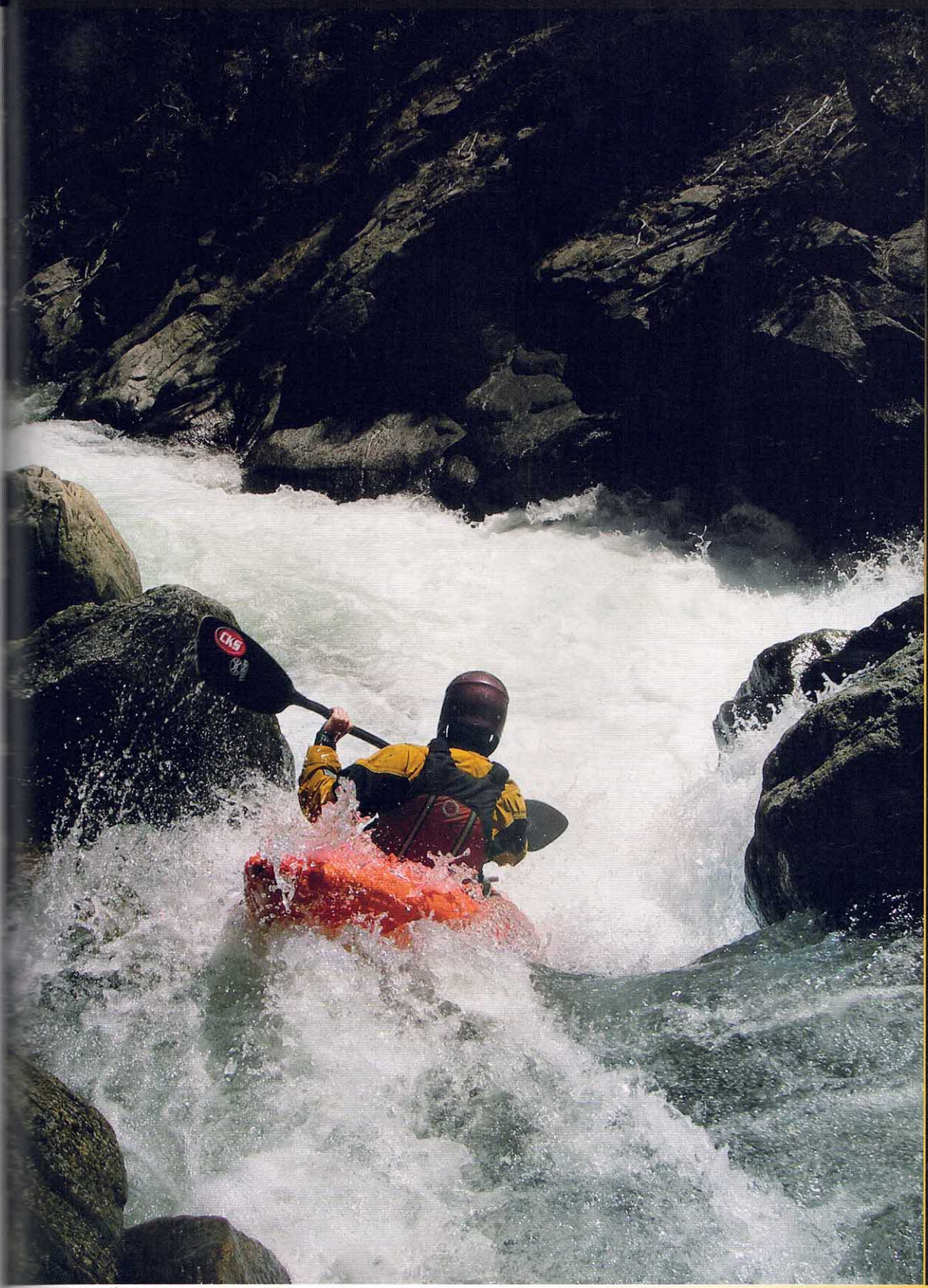
Calm. The river transforms into a meandering trout stream for about one mile. A decision awaits teams here. Either camp on the wonderful beaches and be prepared for a mishap-free ten-hour day of whitewater on day five or make the push through the biggest portage of the run (recommended). The next small gorge forms quickly and could lure the unsuspecting paddler. Get out well above and scout a powerful vert with an ugly hole. We portaged by seal launching into the pool, but it may be runnable. The next waterfall slide drop is sweet, and better than coffee at seven am.

Eddy-hop cautiously and eventually start portaging on river right. This is the Jim Bridger Gorge, and the hardest portage I've ever done. Stumble and curse through the boulder field, eventually putting-on for a short flatwater paddle. It's not over, just the halfway point. Continue portaging river right and get to the bottom of the NRs, where more ultra-stout paddling and hopefully day four camp awaits. If it's already day five, keep pushing.

Another super heavy drop is found at the put-in below JB's Portage. A multi-step series of boofs, holes, and sheer chaos can be paddled from top to bottom, partially portaged on the left, or completely portaged on the right. The double-drop combo at the center of the series is tricky, and powerful enough to blow a skirt. One of the harder drops I've ever run.

The classic Rocky Mountain Mank section ensues. Good eddies make everything easy

EVAN ROSS, ES, ES ⅄ KM & ES, BRAD HIGINBOTHAM ♦HIKE-IN, RUN THE SHIT, BOAT RIDE OUT



KM Evan Ross A class V sneak, with a class V+ runout into a must-make eddy above a 400′ cascade

to move down, but some of the drops are very steep. The last boulder garden has a hairy horizon-line overlooking *the* Bull Lake. Ross routed us through with a smile. Pristine is an understatement. The most untouched lake I've ever seen, and surrounded by an equally untouched forest. Apparently fire can't even penetrate the walls of this gargantuan canyon.

Bull Lake (not BL Res) would make an awesome day four camp. Portage left at the end of the lake, and put-on for the nearly mandatory crux section. Negotiate the class V+ whitewater carefully. A 1/2-mile later, a right and then a left bend signal the must make left eddy above the only non-boater named rapid on the run—Bull Lake Falls. The name says nothing and everything about the size and stature of this 400' cascade, which can be portaged on the left. This is the second biggest portage of the run, and the views are amazing.

The Sequel Section of the Rocky Mountain Mank is even better than the first. Eddy-to-eddy moves are possible through the braided whitewater. Eventually things mellow to class IV, and then III for a few miles of scenic granite wall vistas. They looked as big as the Black Canyon's Painted Wall. The respite is nice, but the action isn't over.

The riverbanks change to an arid landscape just before dropping into a limestone gorge. The first drop is spectacular, and the second is a portage. A few corners lead to a mandatory and deceiving portage. Use caution to avoid flushing into this sieved out canyon. The portaging in here is rough. We made it work on river left, but it was sketchy.

Less threatening class V continues through the rest of the gorge, and eventually it mellows to V-. The gorge walls recede and a flatwater paddle fills the next few miles to the take-out. Helmet off and checking out the elk wading in the river, you round a right bend and scramble for an eddy above one last gorge. A man-made eight-foot vert, two or three more slides, and then one last drop pours into Bull Lake Reservoir.

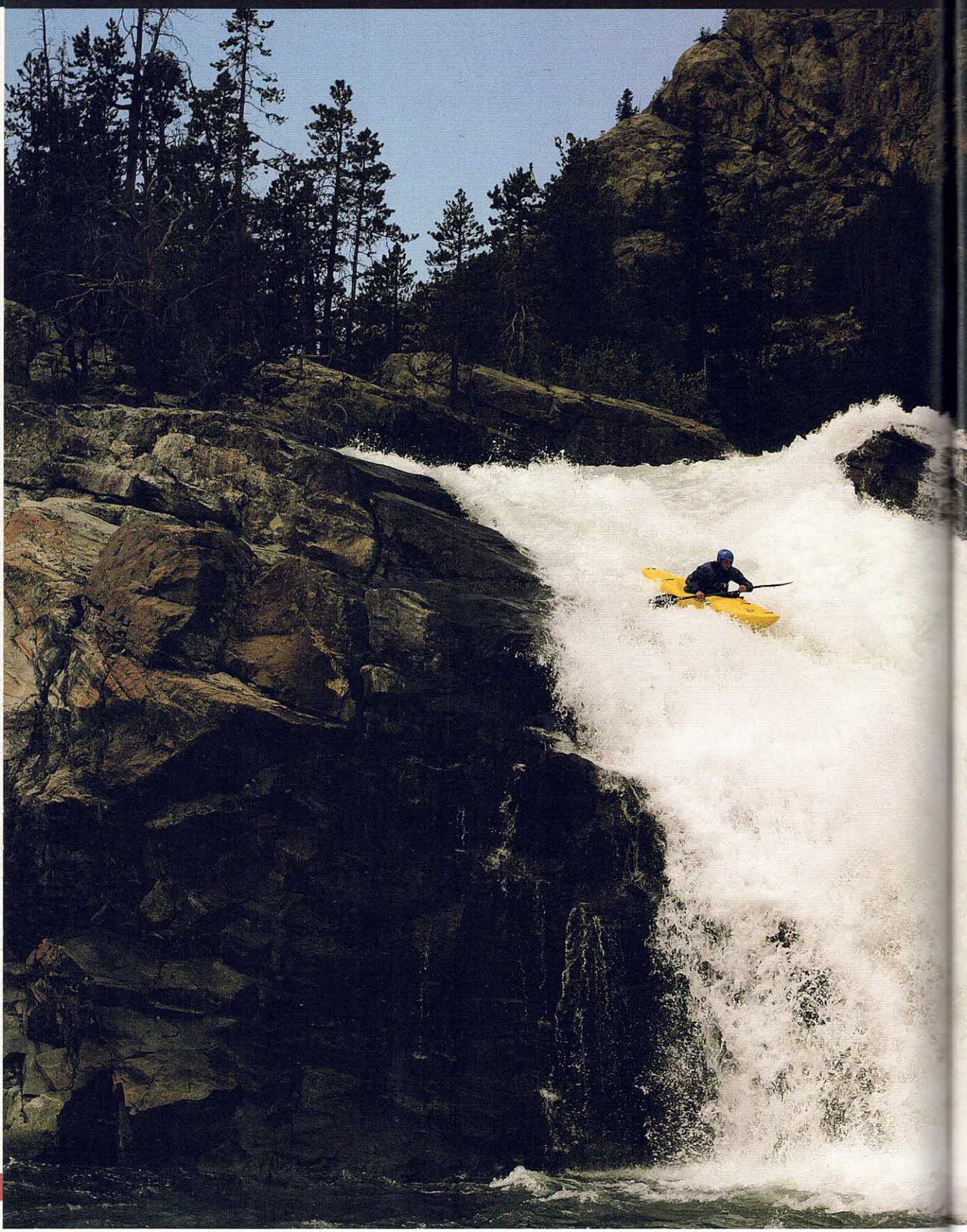
It's late on day five, and if things are going well you've made it to Bull Lake Reservoir. A pre-planned boat shuttle is nearly mandatory for the 9-mile long reservoir. If the boat plan fell through, camp in the plains above the reservoir, and paddle the flatwater out the next day. The rest of day 6 will be spent running shuttle. Otherwise, try to finish shuttle, camp at the put-in, and rally home the next morning. I ate two meals in a Lander breakfast café, and am ever grateful that we arranged for the boat shuttle.

Directions

Go to Lander, hike up the Popo Agie and see what you think. If you believe that you can handle ten times the hiking and ten times the whitewater then continue north on Hwy 287. When you see the sign for Bull Lake, turn west and go to the parking near the reservoir spillway. This is the take-out but there is nine miles of flatwater between you and the canyon mouth. A boat shuttle is near mandatory or plan on a sixth day strictly devoted to paddling the lake. The general store where they sell the fishing licenses is just a bit further north on Hwy 287. One of two hike-in points are found by purchasing detailed topo-maps of the entire area. A hike up St. Lawrence basin, a tributary of the SF Little Wind is the simplest approach. Day-one camp is Paradise Basin or beyond. Day-two camp and the put-in are at Deadmans Lake, at the headwaters of the SF Bull Lake Creek.

EVAN ROSS KM DROPPING INTO THE LIMESTONE GORGES TOWARDS THE END

Bull Lake Creek



Winds • Bull Lake Creek

EVAN ROSS ES HAAGEN DAZEN, WYOMING OTTER SLIDE

Warm Springs & New Fork

Warm Springs Creek

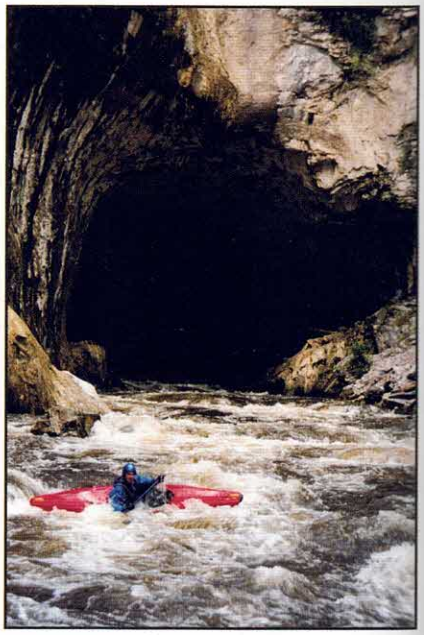
Warm Springs is a classic if just for the experience of subterranean paddling. That's right, the river goes through two caves. While this run is consistently steep with good rapids, the overall quality can vary depending on the wood situation. Recently there have been fires in the area and paddlers have reported deadfall in the river. To compound the problem the Wind River drainage is experiencing an extended drought and has not had the big flows needed to flush out debris.

At the put-in there should be enough water to paddle easily. A little bony is okay. It has been run at pretty high levels but be ready for a very rowdy time. The action starts quickly and not far into the run look out for a bend to the left with a wild section of Class V+ that terminates with a ten-footer onto a rock shelf. This one is easy to get sucked into. Scout and or portage right. From there the river twists and turns and while it is in a steep walled canyon it is generally easy to scout or portage at river level.

For almost the entire length of the creek, there is a century old flume that was built by tie-hacks for floating wood downstream for the railroad. Watch out for nails if you are walking on the flume side of the river. Fortunately the creek doesn't have much gradient where it flows through both caves. It is a little disconcerting as you approach the first cavern and the canyon walls close in all directions, so be on the look out. In these tight spots there is potential for river wide logjams that require precarious portaging. Shortly after the second cave the canyon opens up and the water flattens out. At the confluence with the Wind paddle downstream about 2 miles to where the river reaches the highway.

Gauge: Wind River above Red Creek can help to determine the level, but it's a historically inaccurate barometer.

Directions: From Moran Junction drive east on Hwy 287/26 over Togwotee Pass and the Continental Divide. From the top of the pass, drive approximately 22 miles and turn right onto Union Pass Rd. Follow the improved dirt road as it switchbacks up into the mountains toward Union Pass and Pinedale (this is a major shortcut if you are headed that way). Stay on Union Pass Road and put in six miles from the highway. There are no great public take-out options for this run and we have lost the one private take-out. To reach the best legal option return to Highway 287/26, turn right, and toward Dubois, WY. If you are looking right you will see the impressive Warm Springs Canyon. In about two miles the river almost touches the highway. There are wide shoulders for parking and it is easy to climb up the bank from the river. Another option is a ½ mile down at the bridge to the Dubois airstrip or floating four miles down to town.



CFS	300<optimal<500
Class	V
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	195 fpm, 400 crux
Length	8 miles
Season	after peak, May, June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Union Pass Rd Bridge
Take-out	Hwy 287 (private)

New Fork

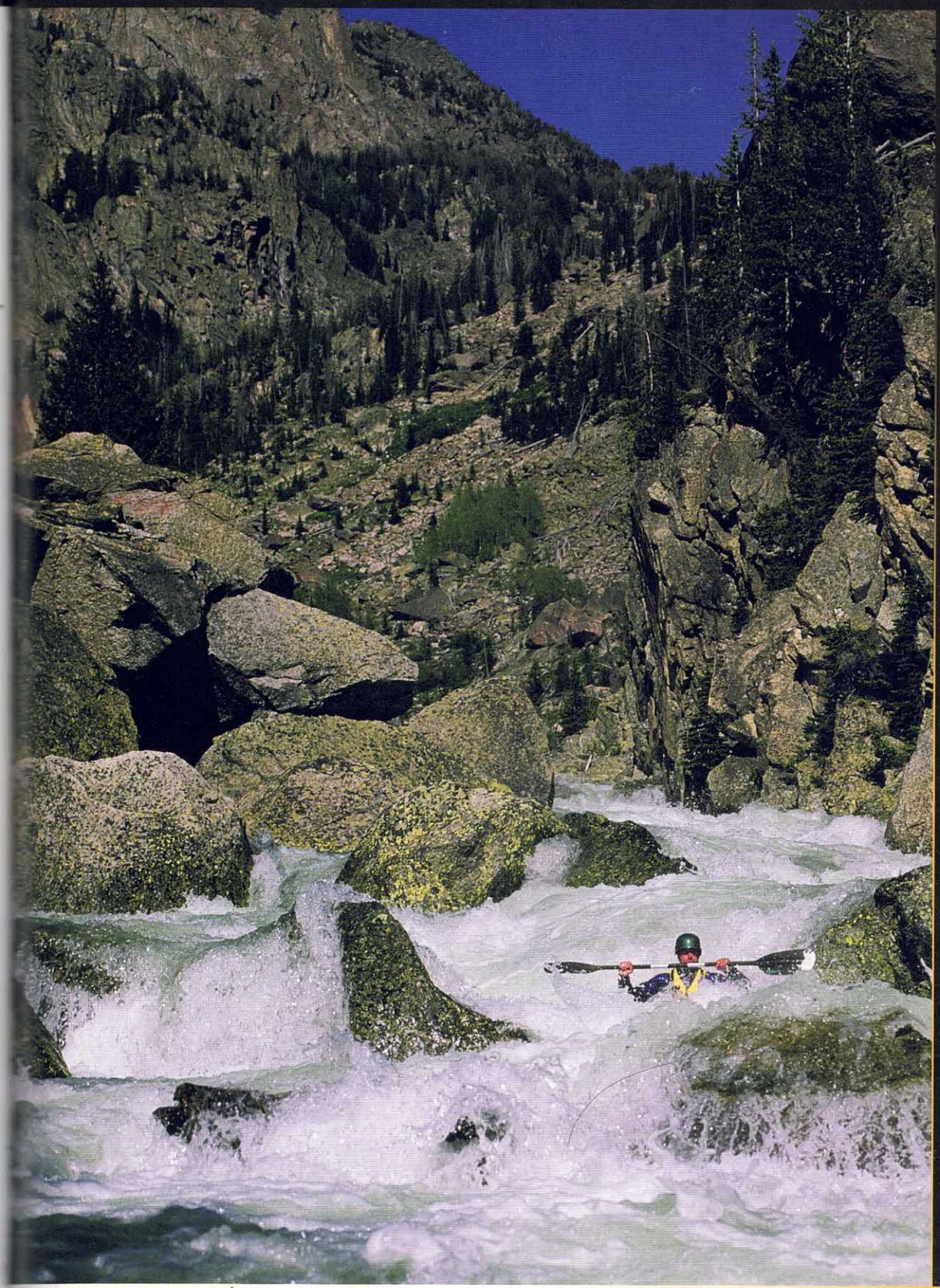
The Upper New Fork is an amazing class V steep creek flowing west from the alpine wilderness of the Wind River Range through a granite canyon. This run is best done after peak as the spring flush tends to clean up avalanche debris. Beginning at New Fork Lakes boat ramp, enjoy the scenic paddle to the northwest corner of the lakes. At this point the trail is lakeside. Get out and rig your boat for a seven mile hike up the canyon. The trail is mostly in open country and back-yaks work well for the hike. Both the trail and the scenery are excellent and the rigors of hiking are soon forgotten, especially when you begin to hear and then see thumping whitewater. While a couple drops are easy to scout on the hike up, most of the run is just out of view.

Put in at New Fork Park where the river flattens out. Do not let the

CFS	200<optimal<300
Class	V (V+s, NRs)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	151 fpm
Length	6.5 miles
Season	June, July (after peak)
Gauge	visual
Put-in	New Fork Park
Take-out	Nw Frk Lk Boat Ramp

Dave Pennington Jason McGowan A Warm Springs cave

THE WIND RIVER RANGE IS VAST AND LARGELY INACCESSIBLE. HOME TO SOME OF THE MOST REMOTE AND RARELY EXPLORED RIVERS AND CREEKS IN THE ROCKIES, PADDLERS THAT VENTURE HERE SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING.



Winds • Warm Springs & New Fork

GREG VON DOERSTEN AARON PRUZAN LIMITS OF CONTROL, NEW FORK

average gradient deceive you as the drops are steep and technical. Prescout the first drop, and consider putting in below this crux. Shortly below is Limits of Control, scout or portage on the right (which holds true for the entire run). This long and complicated rapid defines Class V+ whitewater. A portage of the center section reduces the difficulty to more sane levels. A couple miles of read-and-run lead to a trailside rapid that is easy to see on the hike-in. This drop has several technical moves above and below the crux 12' waterfall. Boat scout action continues until the river enters another gorge with a log choked but runnable NR mess.

After a mile more of whitewater fun and another steep drop that requires scouting or portaging the New Fork abruptly flattens out and meanders another mile to the lake. There are potential portages due to strainers throughout the run, particularly in the last mile of flatwater.

Directions: From Jackson, drive southeast on Highway 191 up the Hoback River and over the rim into the Green River Basin. After crossing the Green River at Warren Bridge drive approximately 2.5 more miles and turn left on 40 Rod Road. Drive east about five miles and turn left on Wyoming 352. Head north approximately 6.5 miles and turn right toward New Fork Lakes Campground and Boat Ramp. There is also a rapid right below the Lakes.

Wind River Range—Worth a Second Look

These rivers have been done and while not outstanding could deserve another look. Who knows? A couple logs could have blown out or the whitewater may look good to you. Bring the topo maps, hiking shoes, and a thirst for adventure.

Roaring Fork: Flows into the Green River a few miles below Green River Lakes. This one is easy to hike up and check out. Many of the drops probably haven't been run—it's steep!

Lower Fremont Creek: About 10 miles north of Pinedale is Elkhart Park. From there is a steep trail down to Long Lake. Immediately below the lake is a good drop that had a log in it with more of the same downstream. These logs could have flushed. The last 3⁄4 miles above Fremont Lake is fun read-and-run Class IV but then there is a flatwater paddle out on the lake.

Pole Creek: Above Half Moon Lake just northeast of Pinedale this little creek comes roaring down the mountains. It has an incredibly aesthetic gorge that is trailside. Above the good gorge the river is on the too-steep side with lots of wood and the rapids below are a little manky. It is really easy to get to and worth another go if you like big drops.

Boulder Creek: Above Boulder Lake east of Pinedale Boulder Creek is trailside. It has plenty of gradient but is fairly featureless and is described as cruising down a sluiceway.

East Fork: Also southeast of Pinedale the East Fork is reported as a fun run with a few problems with wood and barbed-wire fences

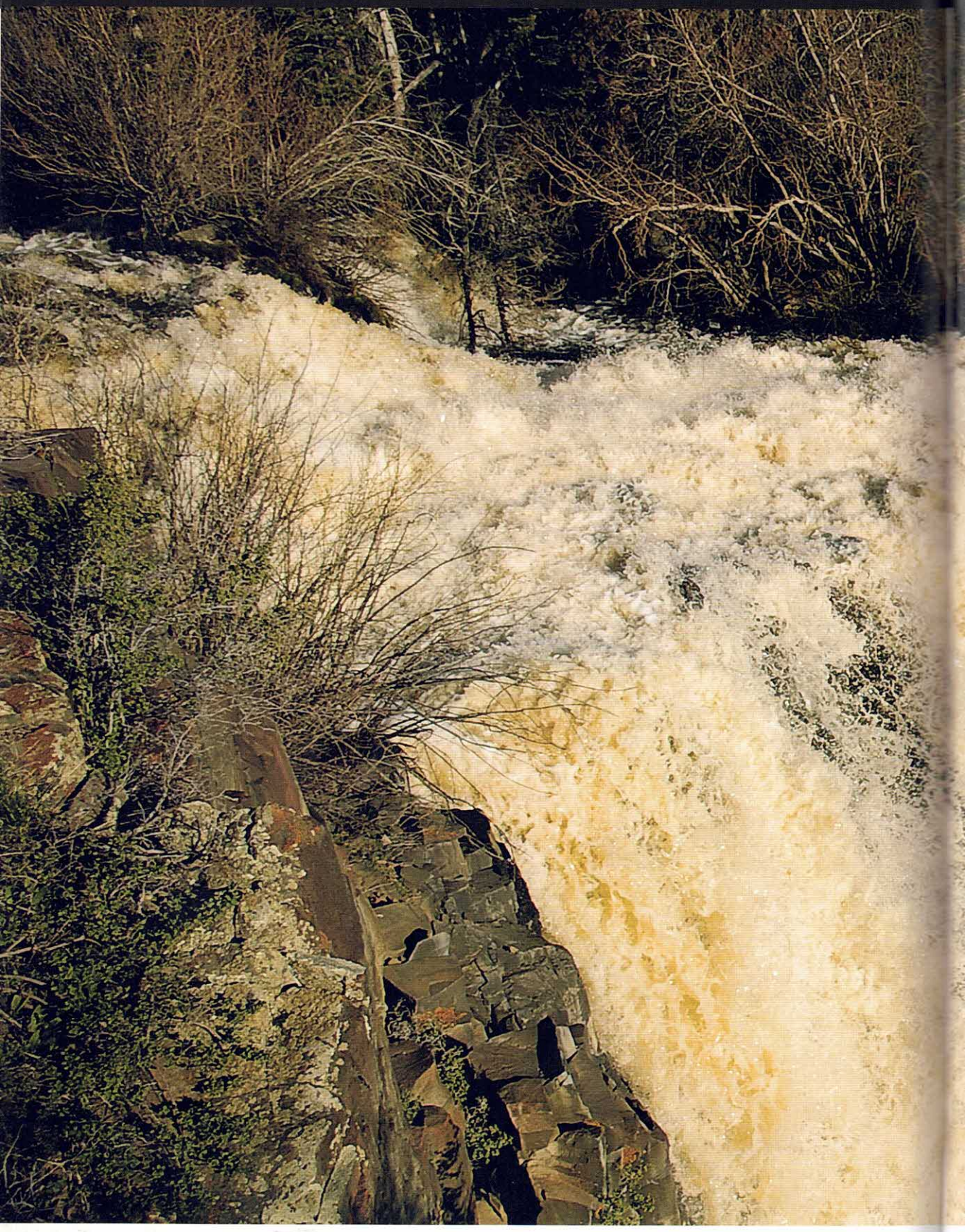
Lower Big Sandy: This run is southeast of Pinedale and while there are good reports, specifics are a little sketchy. The Lower Big Sandy is from Leckie to Buckskin Crossing.

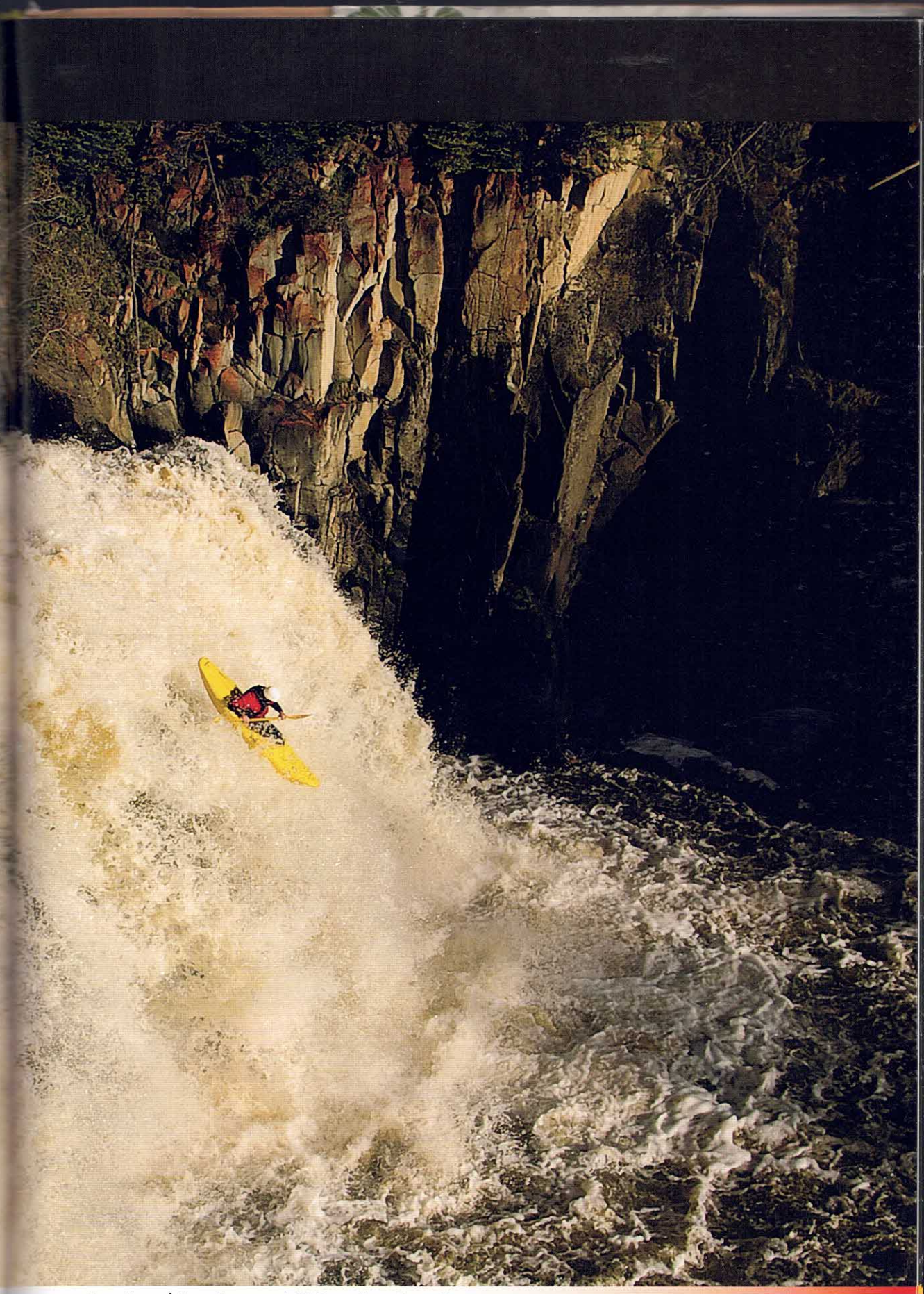
No Good: The Jakey's Fork, Dinwoody, Little Popo Agie, Upper Big Sandy, and Upper Fremont Creek have been run but didn't receive glowing reviews.

-Aaron Pruzan (Warm Springs, New Fork, More)

Greg Von Doersten Aaron Pruzan New Fork Falls

Yampa Drainage



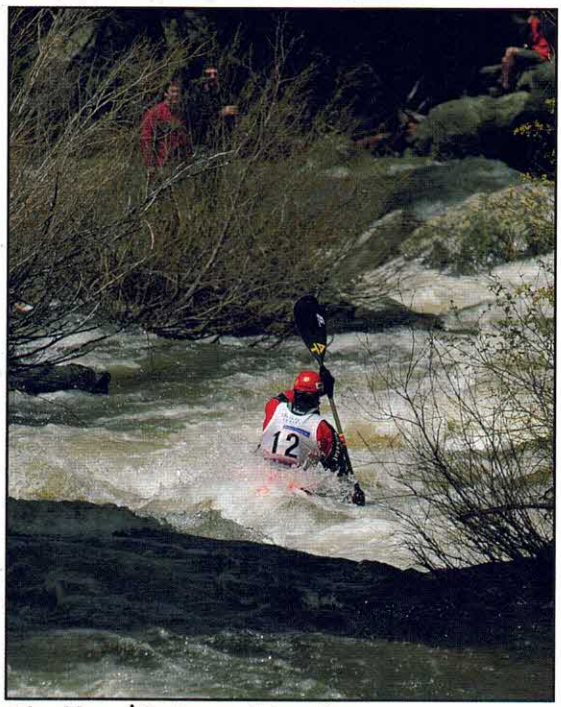


Kevin Fisher Kevin Thompson AC Slater Falls, Slater Creek

Fish Creek

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
Gauge Height	1.9′	2.3′	2.7′	3.1′
CFS	250	457	761	1190
Character	upper only	sushi	seared	fried
Upper Class	V-	V	V+	NR
Lower Class	not running	IV+	V (V+)	V+
Quality	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	250 fpm upper, 205 fpm crux lower			
Remoteness	close to civilization on all sides			
Hitchability	good with other paddlers			
Length	.8 mile upper, 2.6 miles lower			
Season	May, June, July			
Gauge	Fish Creek @ upper station near Steamboat Springs			
Put-in	Fish Creek Falls or Diversion Dam			
Take-out	Steamboat Blvd Bridge or Safeway			

The fish was this big! Despite the over exaggerated size comparisons, few paddlers will question the ferocious continuousness of Fish Creek, a quality beast that drains the small valley to the north of the Steamboat Ski area. As expected, lower flows slow things up because you are scraping over rocks. High flows are the highlight, and the higher the level the tougher and scarier it turns. The Fish really can get this big, which is big enough to swallow a paddler. Enjoy the vicious humor as you watch others get picked off by the numerous sleeper holes that dot the riverscape, until eventually you end up in the lead—a sure sign that you are the next victim.



Jeff Moag Jay Kincaid Upper Fish

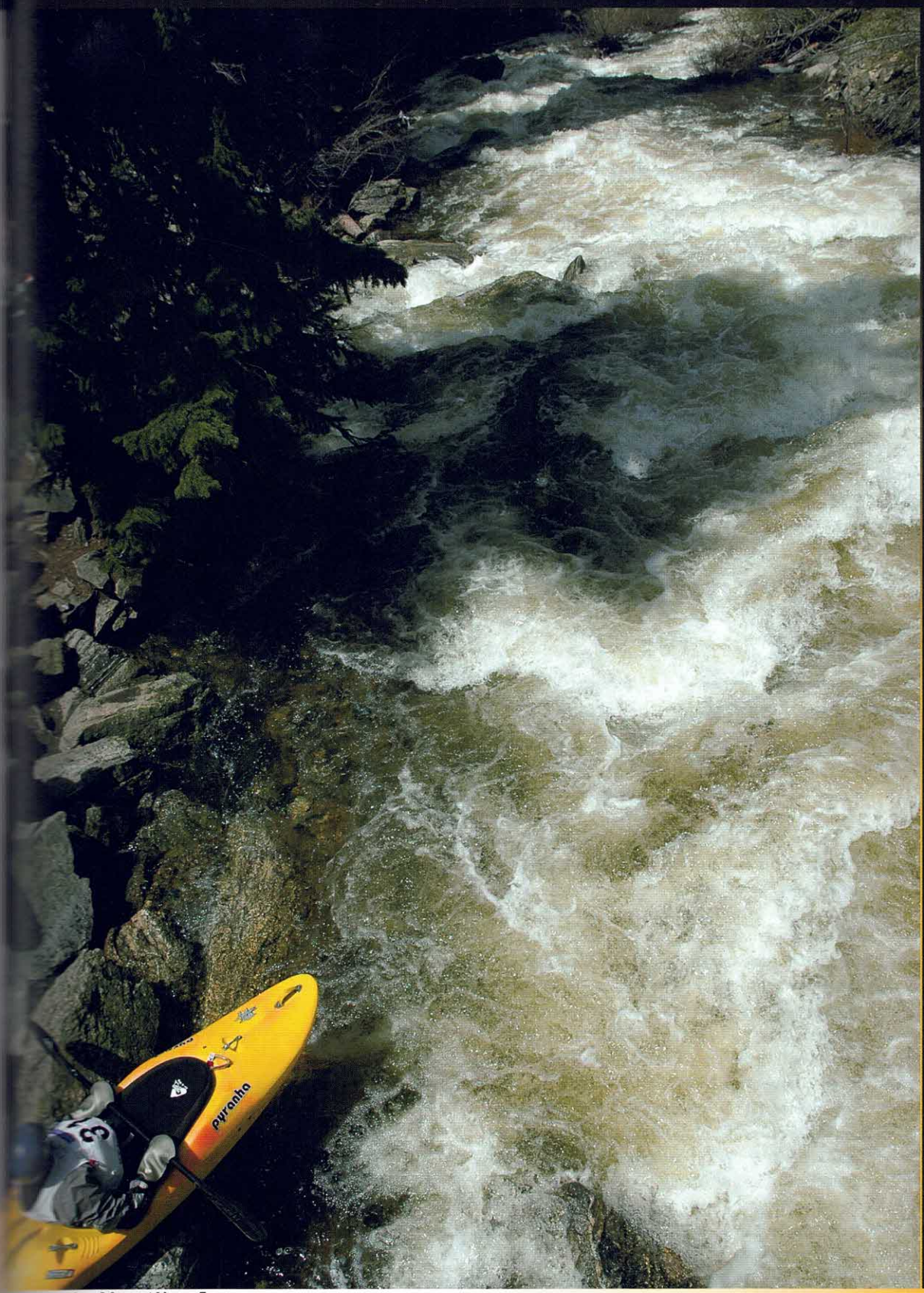
The good news is that friendly first time levels exist, and a few river access options allow for fish cuttings of similar difficulty. If the water is low, and you're looking for action over scrappiness, then run the steeper and more committing upper, and just the top of the lower, noting the seriousness and optional portage route of the diversion dam. Paddlers putting on at higher flow, and not wanting the difficulty of the upper, can put in just below the diversion dam for a jump start of a day in the first few corners. An optional put-in (and take-out for the upper) can be found at the Steamboat Blvd bridge, and is the best if the river is at raging levels. The lower take-out provides for the longest run, and ends in the heart of civilization—the grocery store. The fresh fish is free, and I recommend grilling it from top to bottom on high heat.

Upper

A short downhill hike on the trail leads to the bridge across Fish Creek, below the enchanting Fish Creek Falls. It's possible to hike up to the base of the falls, but easier to run it when you go to run the North Fork. When preparing to put in, be sure to angle the boats in side-by-side seal launch position, since failure to launch at nearly the same time leads to solo paddling for the duration of the .8 mile slingshot to the pre-scouted eddy above the Diversion Dam. More eddies are here at lower flow, but once it gets above 2.8′ there isn't an opportunity for eddy conversations.

Shortly downstream is a ledge as the river bends to the right. If the level is too high to scout, and if you feel good, then route to the inside corner for the safe line.

ENJOY THE VICIOUS HUMOR AS YOU WATCH OTHERS GET PICKED OFF BY THE NUMEROUS SLEEPER HOLES THAT DOT THE RIVERSCAPE, UNTIL EVENTUALLY YOU END UP IN THE LEAD—A SURE SIGN THAT YOU ARE THE NEXT VICTIM.



JEFF MOAG ♦ UPPER FISH PUT-IN

Fish Creek & NF Fish

The diversion dam can be and is often run even at mandatory swim levels, because a good boof setup usually clears the bottom hole quite well. But, it's a definite scout to avoid potential problems at this possibly terminal ledge. A protracted swim would be brutal.

Lower

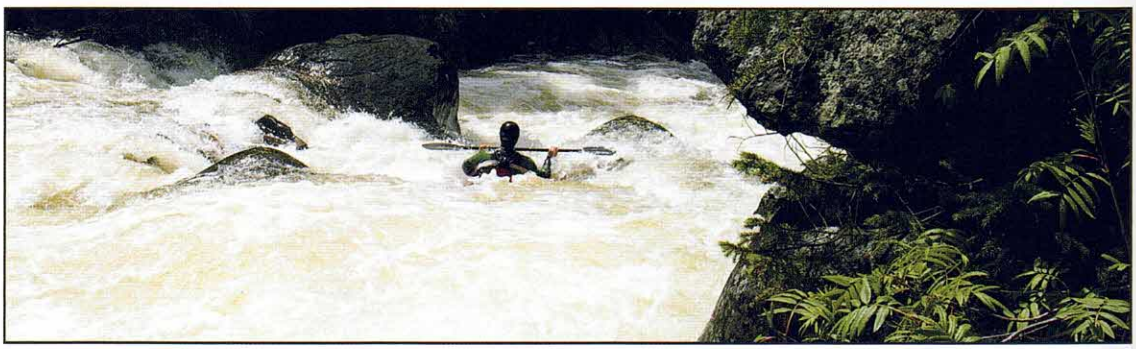
This starts at the Diversion Dam, and remains difficult even at low levels as it bangs its way down to the Steamboat Blvd bridge. Things mellow slightly below here, which means at very high levels the whitewater finally becomes manageable for the next two miles. Be heads up as trees can clog the main channel, and the sleeper holes, none of which are keepers, can tumble you for a couple of ends before spitting you out. Smile at the curiously watching golfers.

It's possible to boat past the Safeway, but three culverts must be negotiated before Fish Creek joins with the Yampa at the top of the town run. You'll want to switch boats at the Safeway if exercising the continuation option.

Directions

Take out at the Safeway to the south of Steamboat, visible from Lincoln Ave (Hwy 40). Take Pine Grove Rd south from the parking lot, and hang a left on Mt. Werner Rd, then another quick left onto Steamboat Blvd. The road crosses the river at the bridge, where a put-in is on river right. Turn right up the gravel road, which eventually dead-ends where a trail leads to the Diversion Dam.

The put-in for the Upper can be found by returning to Lincoln Ave, turning east onto 3rd St, then right onto Fish Creek Rd (32 Rd). Continue to the Fish Creek Falls trailhead parking.



North Fork Fish

The North Fork Fish has a gradient problem. It's not that it's the steepest, even at an impressive 520 fpm, but more because it only contains a handful of drops that are over 20' in this stacked section. The result is an extremely steep cascade section with some probable portages. First explored by the late Charlie Beavers, who took the saw to this one and remains one of the few to ever run the infamous Hairy Beaver, this section is a rarity to catch at the optimal flow. You need the precise amount of water to get down the run, but anymore and all of the must-make eddies disappear. It's an expected problem when any creek approaches even the 400 fpm mark. Look for 2.4' as ideal, with instant can-of-beatdown opened around 3'.

Assuming even the optimal level on the gauge, the mere shift in daily fluctuations can be enough to up the excitement level in this micro creek, so a go for it attitude will be a necessity. A guide would help to achieve that attitude if you're having trouble finding the right mood. A run starts with a time consuming scout of the take-out eddy, and potentially even the entire run to limit the butterflies.

From the Fish Creek Falls footbridge scramble up the river-right shore upstream of the confluence to a must-make take-out eddy. It wouldn't hurt to keep scouting, but you could also just go for it at this point. If the troops are in, the necessary trail can be found between the two parking lots, where it switchbacks up and across to the North Fork put-in. Plan on 45 minutes of hiking with big plastic backpacks, eventually past a mine, signaling a ¼-mile of hiking to go before scrambling down to the creek.

CFS	2.4'=optimal
Class	V+ (NRs)
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	520 fpm
Length	1 mile
Season	May, June
Gauge	Fish Crk (barometer)
Put-in	after uranium mine
Take-out	Fish Creek Falls

Once finished with the portage, and the tightly falling drops below the confluence to the footbridge, continue into the Upper Fish run. It's easier to run the shuttle for the upper than it is to hike back up to the parking lots.

Directions: Take 3rd St east from Lincoln Blvd, then right onto Fish Creek Rd (32 Rd). Continue to the trailhead parking lot.

Ice Cream Rules

1. Contrary to popular belief, you merely have to ROLL to owe Ice Cream. If you swim, you must still drink the obligatory booty beer or booty shot (I prefer Wild Turkey 101).
2. The Ice Cream Rules only apply to creekboating.
3. Everyone on the trip must agree to play the ice cream game in order to paddle with the rest of the group.
4. This is essentially a roll contest—the person who rolls the most times owes the rest of the team ice cream.
5. If you are the only one to swim, you owe ice cream, no matter how many times anyone else rolled. You still must chug your booty beer, but at least the ice cream will wash your nasty foot fungus out of your mouth.
6. If you swim, and the group size is within reason, the other participants may choose to redeem their ice cream winnings in the form of either milkshakes or Pub Drawn Guinness Pints, when available.
7. You must set up under water for it to be counted as an Eskimo Roll. If you pull a monster brace out of your ass, it does not count against you.
8. Games ending in a tie mean that both or all losing parties owe ice cream, but they may split the cost. One round of ice cream only per run.
9. If members of your team walk a rapid and you roll in that rapid, you only owe ice cream to those who ran that particular rapid succesfully. Again, if you swim you owe ice cream and you must drink an alcoholic beverage from your booty, no matter who else runs the rapid.
10. It is proper conduct to taunt the members of your team when they roll up, and continue to taunt them until the debt is paid.

The Ice Cream Rules originated in the steep boulder strewn rapids found on the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island. Due to numerous dairy farming operations in the region the ice cream found in the local shops is especially fresh, creamy and delicious. Rolling represents a near total loss of control when kayaking a steep creek and therefore should be limited as much as possible. We all roll, but on the shallow and mank filled creeks found in the Rockies it is especially important to try and keep your head above water and away from the roadside blast rocks.

This is not the northwest where things are deep and pushy, and where a plug and roll approach is an acceptable style of paddling. Rolling on creeks such as the North Saint Vrain, West Fork Clear Creek or Big Thompson could lead to a world of hurt. This is your incentive to stay upright and clean the shit out of the hardest rapid on any given run. If you don't believe it is reasonable to not roll on any given run, then don't play. As an example of how the ice cream game can improve your *game,* take a look at our stats from the Brazos. Over two days our crew of experienced ice cream players had a total of two rolls, and they were preformed by only one member of the team. We ran all but the three largest cascades, generally considered to be mandatory portages. Licking your winnings is one of the most rewarding feelings after an intense creek run on a hot summer day ever, and even the loser should enjoy a frozen treat as a show of camaraderie.

If no one in your party rolls, your team has mastered the ice cream game for a day, but you probably weren't running hard enough whitewater.

Steamboat Town

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	200	400	1000	1600
Run Character	kitten	house cat	bobcat	mtn lion
Play Character	early bird	getting wet	sick	helixes and more
Class	II+	III-	III	III+
Quality	★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	25 fpm with a nice fluffy hole to back it up			
Remoteness	in town			
Hitchability	walk the bike path			
Length	park-and-play or optional			
Season	May to August			
Gauge	Yampa @ Steamboat			
Put-in	Yampa River Park			
Take-out	20 Mile Road Bridge			

Steamboat's Yampa river is a mellow stretch of whitewater that cruises just a few blocks to the east of the main drag, in the back alley of restaurants and small businesses that are forced to sandbag the shoreline in the good years to keep from becoming one with the river. A bike path is the bustling streamside thorough-fair, pacing along side the class III float. A handful of manmade obstructions have increased the entertainment value of this river substantially, but low flow now attracts a string of innertubes—the by-product of multiple tube-rental companies near-by. Avoid hot and sunny weekends at low flow if looking for a solitary experience.

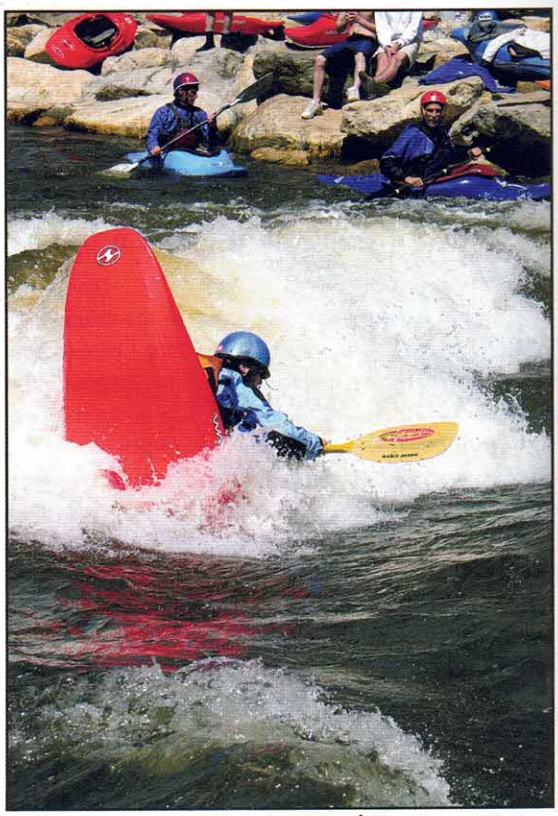
As the water increases the tubers disappear, the stark-beginners get more nervous as the level transforms the manmade obstacles into well-defined eddies and eddy lines, and the Yampa River Park slalom course is the relaxed training ground of the run, found roadside to Lincoln Ave immediately south of the downtown business district.

The bigger news turns toward Charlies Hole, or C-Hole. Although A, B, and D can be found nearby, none of them are as well formed as the C-hole, just upstream of the 20 Mile Road bridge, next to the Library. Typically disgustingly cold despite the sunny weather, the hot springs on surfer's right will keep the hands defrosted. The C-hole goes off with blunts on the corners, helixes and more when a wave at higher flows and big loops interlaced with cartwheel-to-splitwheel combinations at hole-like levels.

Start out with some freestyle, throw some barbecue in for lunch, and finish out the day with an afternoon creeking mission on one of many of the nearby options that will be at prime levels. Note that extremely high flows form some very low bridges in town. Scout if trees are floating down the river.

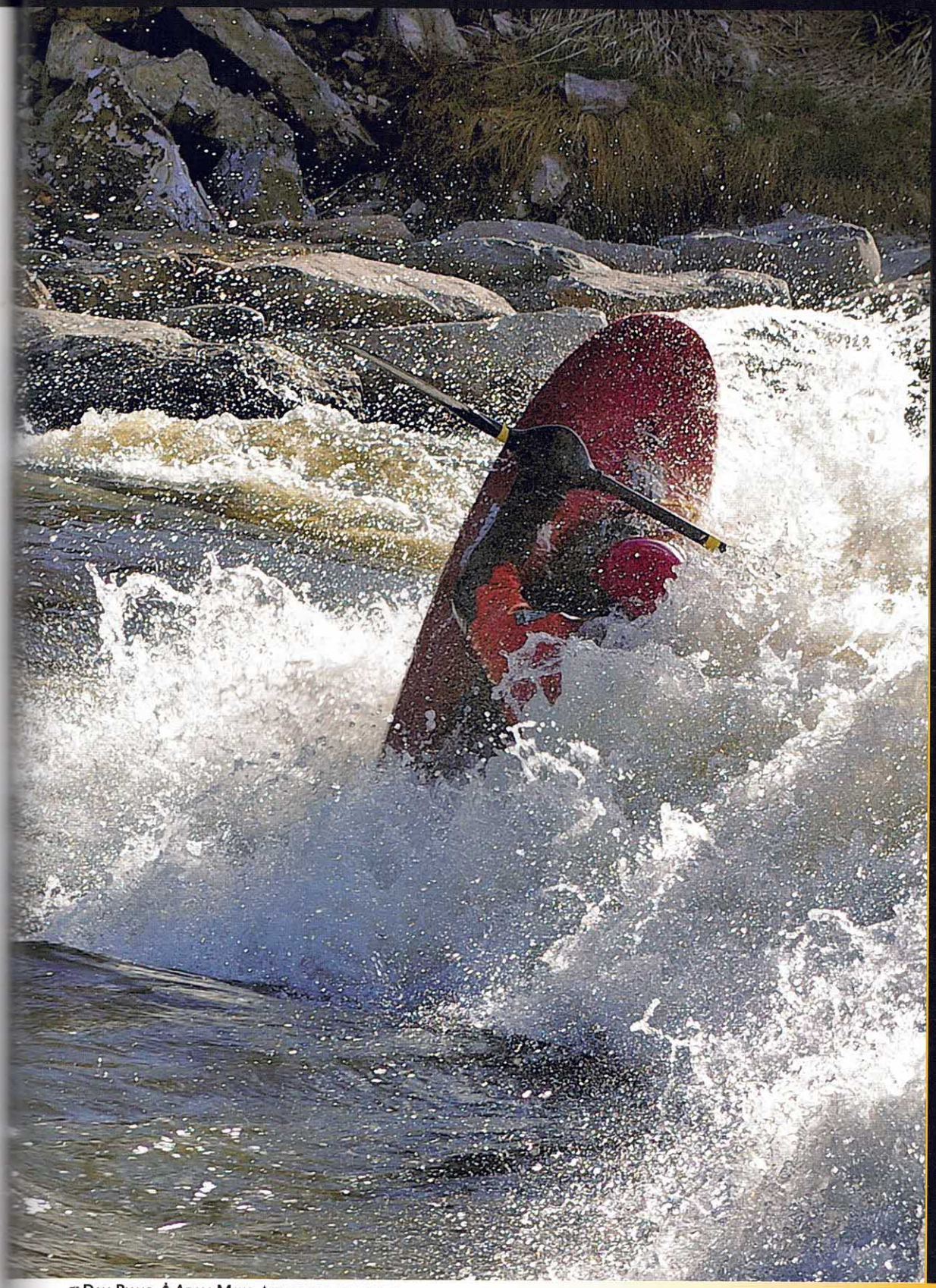
Directions

The take-out and the park-and-play staging area are found on river right, just south of the 20 Mile Rd (33 Rd) bridge and on the opposite side of the street from the library. The typical kayaker put-in is at the Yampa River Park, at the visible island from Hwy 40. An upper put-in exists near the Mt. Werner Road exit at the edge of town, but the whitewater is uneventful at the top.



Jed Selby Katie Selby C-Hole

START OUT WITH SOME FREESTYLE, THROW SOME BARBEQUE IN FOR LUNCH, AND FINISH OUT THE DAY WITH AN AFTERNOON CREEKING MISSION.



DAN PIANO ADAM MAYO STOMPING A BACKSTAB

Elk River

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	600	900	1800	3000
Character	upper park-n-huck	cow	bull	rutt
Upper Class	V	V (V+)	V+	NR
Lower Class	III-	III-	III	III
Upper Quality	★★★	★★★★	★★★	NR
Lower Quality	★	★★	★★★★	★★★★
Gradient	200 fpm upper, 65 fpm lower			
Remoteness	roadside to a country road			
Hitchability	poor, but upper is walkable			
Length	1.3 miles upper, 8.4 miles lower			
Season	May, June, July			
Gauge	Elk River near Millner			
Put-in	North Fork or Forest Service Info Center			
Take-out	below Box Canyon Falls or Hwy 129 bridge			

What remains a roadside run in a scenic forest is well on its way to hosting the next major right-to-float battlefront. Landowners are attempting to block access to all river users by publicly banning together and announcing that all floaters are guilty of civil trespass. The group, which at one point included the owner of Steamboat Ski Corp., epitomizes the irony of claiming river ownership in direct conflict to recreational profit, as some of the landowners earn money by providing commercial fishing launches. Others seem content banning all river craft that could affect the pristine enjoyment of their riverfront property.

In 2006, a commercial raft outfitter was granted a commercial use permit. The courts refused to honor some of the landowners requests against the permit, in a nutshell stating that they would have to take the river ownership issue to court separately. Be on your guard when accessing the river or even just driving Hwy 64 with kayaks on the roof. If confronted be extra polite yet firm in your right to float this stretch. This issue generally only concerns the lower (including Willow Creek), as the Upper is on Routt National Forest land.

Upper

A forest service gate is located at the boundary and remains locked until Memorial Day most years—slightly shortening the season. A few miles upstream of this is the crux Box Canyon Falls, where most experts choose to take out just below this signature rapid, which contains an ugly falls on river left, a hole center left, and my preferred line over a rock spine on center right (run left if the level is low). It's usually not very worth it to paddle the rest if planning on portaging Box Canyon Falls, so scout prior to gearing up.

If it's a go, then plan on putting in on the north fork, where FR 400 crosses over the creek. Check for wood on this steep warm-up section that connects into the main just above the first, and only other drop besides the falls, V-Wave. The V-Wave resembles a high volume slanting falls with so much power it flushes out the hole at the bottom. It certainly feels like a vertical drop, but has much more power, and a surprisingly flushy finale.

It's possible to paddle the class IV- runout, which soon mellows to class III as it heads down valley to the traditional Lower put-in. The drastic change in class usually tempts paddlers to link up with one of the other area creek runs instead.

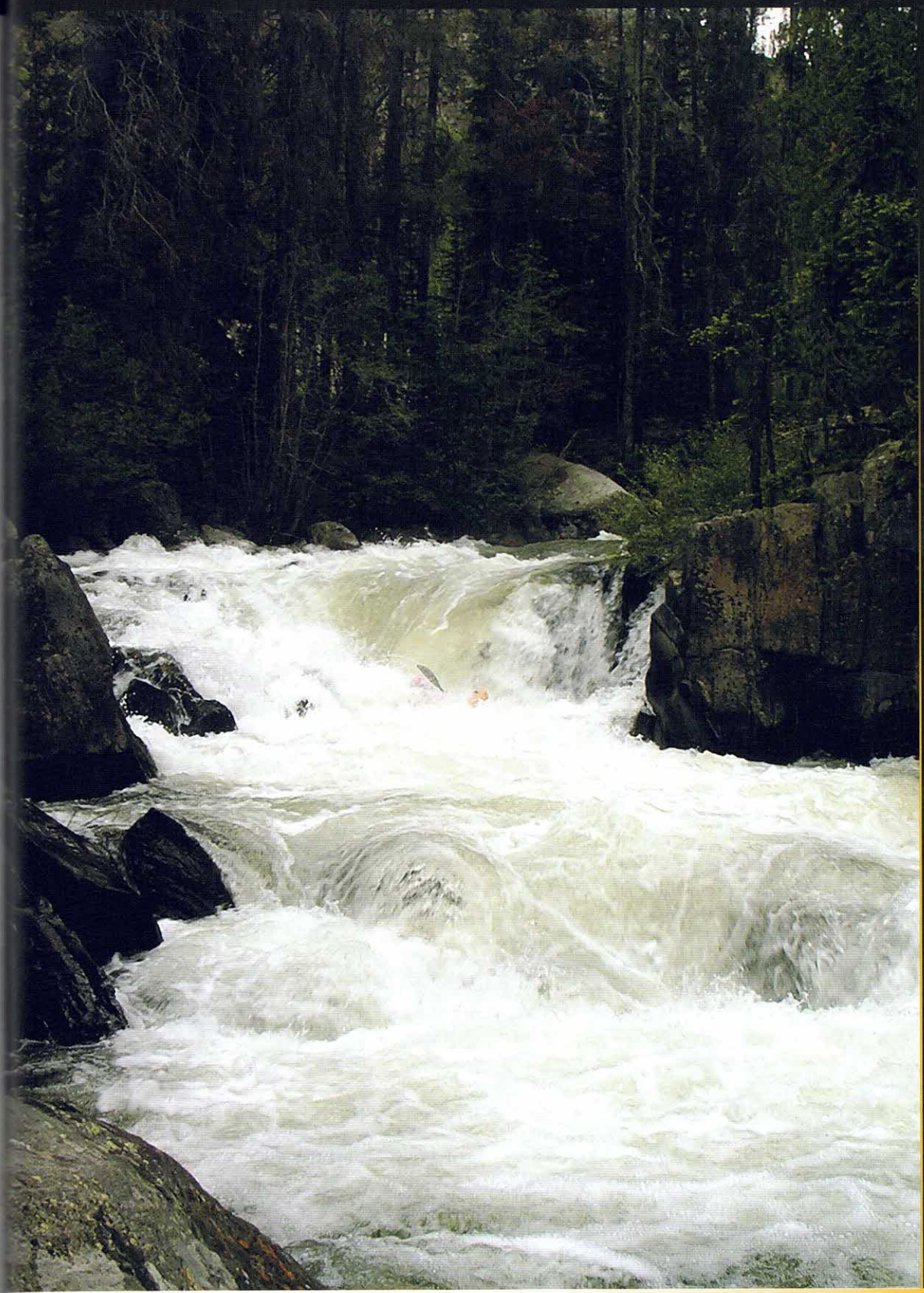
Lower

Continuous class III wave trains rarely let up in this mellow roadside stretch. Although an occasional piece of wood must be avoided, the river is wide enough that there is a slim chance of actually needing to portage—a blessing for avoiding further landowner contact. There aren't many eddies, but some of the waves offer on the fly play.

Directions

The Lower Elk take-out is usually the Hwy 129 bridge, where there should be a 15' easement to preserve river access. The landowners seem to be ignoring this, supposedly saying that it is by permission only. Turn east onto Rd 64 (FR 400) and drive 3.3-miles to reach the Lower put-in at the Forest Service Info Center. The take-out for the upper is just off of FR 400, when the road veers right and begins a steep ascent. The Box Canyon Falls is on the right.

What remains a roadside run in a scenic forest is well on its way to hosting the next major right-to-float battlefront.



Nora Flucke Nate Klema the low water line, Box Canyon Falls

Mad Creek

Typical Steamboatin' can be found here on a run that is the standard mile long, not as steep as Fish Creek and much more committing. This chunky run isn't an easy one for out-of-towners to catch, as it typically runs towards the end of the Steamboat season, after Fish Creek & C-Hole have blown their wads. A river right streamside hike delivers creek hunters to the put-in.

A scout isn't a bad idea, with the first just down the hill from the trails left turn, and a second one just a bit further up. It's mandatory to pre-scout because the annual collection of pinned logs can shift, causing shit to happen. I once ended my trip a mere 100 yards from the put-in, as I peeled out of an eddy in-front of a log jam. Just before reaching the current I felt a completely submerged log slide behind my back and into my boat—effectively pinning my skirt to the inside bottom of my boat. Shish-ka-bob kayaker.

Put in below the lowest logjam, where the trail nears the river about 300 vertical feet later. Half way down is the second drop that you scouted, Bonehead, which narrows towards the bottom where a big hole lurks river left. Hit the inside eddy on the right by bouncing over a flake rock on that side. Take out above the house and private property at the creek mouth.

CFS	180<min
Class	V
Quality	★★★
Gradient	185 fpm
Length	2 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	Mad Crk Trail
Take-out	Hwy 129

Directions: Take Hwy 129 north from Hwy 40 for a little over five miles, and park on the right when you cross over Mad Creek. It's obvious.

Willow Creek

Flowing out of the Hahn's Wilderness to the Northwest of Steamboat Springs, Willow Creek offers continuous low grade V through a beautiful wooded grove just outside of the Routt County National Forest. Thus, it makes sense that the most intense moments of this run generally come from missing the multiple trees that dot the run in every possible manner causing paddlers to duck, boof, and weave around the piles of wood. The natural slalom course created forms a great proving ground to aspiring creekboaters, and at high flow will keep experienced paddlers busy. Willow's proximity to the Upper Elk and Mad Creek make it a great run to combine with another, although Willow often runs earlier than most of the other Routt County creeks (not naturally, but dam control).

The crux of the run comes at the end of a short flatwater float through alpine marshland, where the current enters the canyon and immediately cruises down a ½ mile long rapid formed by the river left scree field. Below this the action will mellow substantially until Whoopy Ridge rapid, which changes its wood placement quite often. Most recently the rapid required a tight right turn cut to avoid an ugly river left channel blocked by a log that has been the cause of a handful of swims.

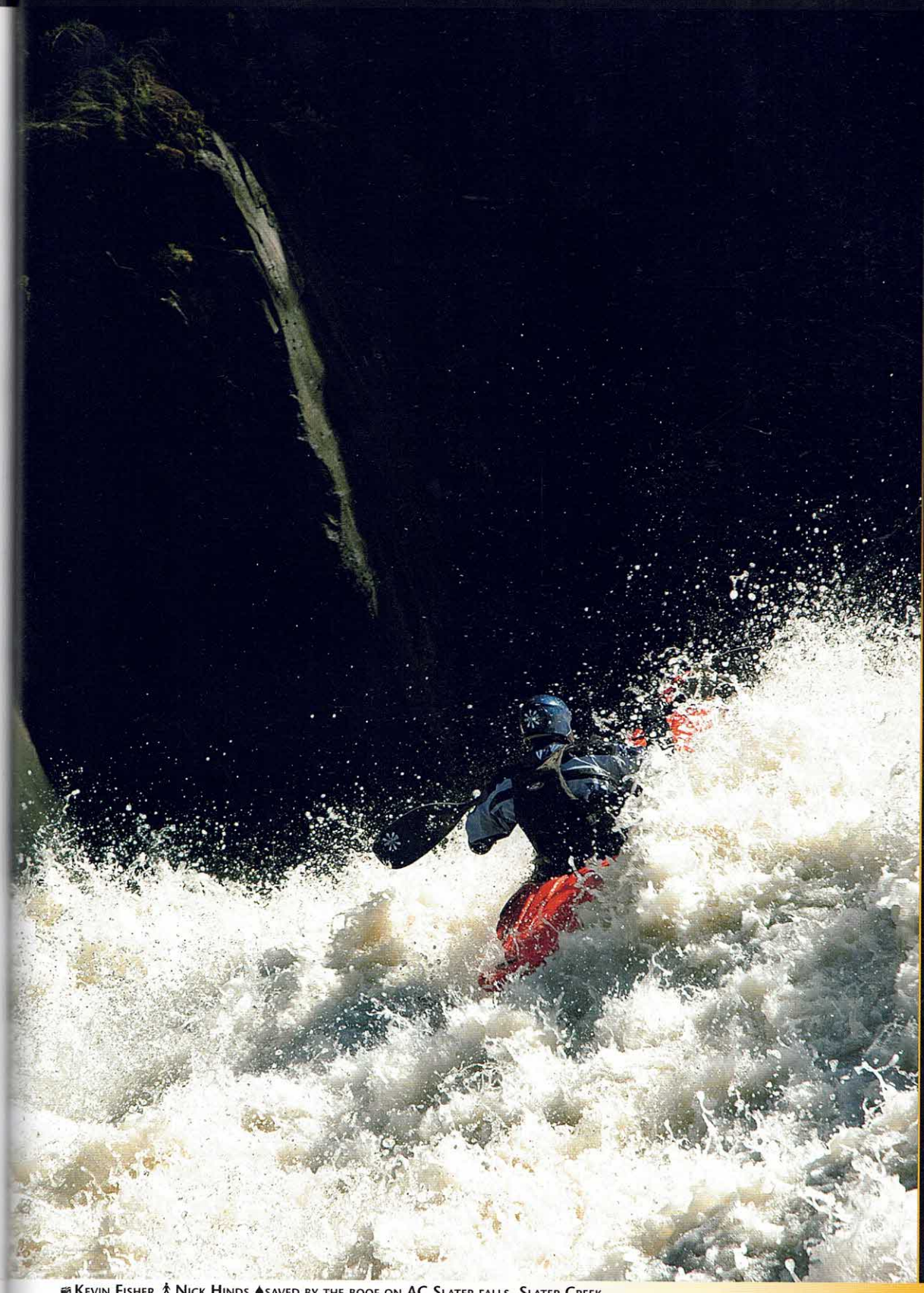
The rest of the run is straight forward read and run over some very nice ledges that offer excellent boof practice. It's not uncommon for the continuous action to split groups quickly in the event of a mishap, as half of the group rescues the swimmer while the other half chases the boat all the way to the confluence of the Elk, and sometimes further. Paddling teams of six or more should split into two groups to avoid unnecessary carnage.

Take-out Issues: If you think paddling relations have been strained on the Elk, they have been rough from the start with the landowner at the mouth of Willow, where the Hwy 64 bridge and formerly ideal take-out is located. Apparently a house hold chore went seriously wrong when the landowner cut down a tree, letting it fall into the traffic lanes of Hwy 64, where a passing vehicle with kayaks was partially crushed by the poorly planned log extraction. The boats sustained minor damage, but the impact was enough to break the rack mounts, fortunately protecting the truck body. The influential business owner offered the passerby's free lift tickets to a local ski area, but when later contacted about it refused to compensate the individuals for the incurred damage.

CFS	200<min<300<best
Class	IV<300<V-
Quality	★★★★
Gradient	90 fpm
Length	5 miles
Season	April, May, June (dam)
Gauge	Willow blw S-boat Lk
Put-in	129 Rd
Take-out	64 Rd

Joe Keck ♦ Dealing with a misadventure

Apparently a household chore went seriously wrong when the landowner cut down a tree, letting it fall into the traffic lanes where a passing vehicle was partially crushed.



Kevin Fisher Nick Hinds saved by the boof on AC Slater falls, Slater Creek

Instead, he's extended his welcome further to the kayaking community by at first placing a barbed wire fence across the river, only to remove it later for fear of liability. Now, liability free, he's dedicated his time to photographing groups of kayakers on Willow, and calling in the local sheriff for harassment assistance. The Sheriff's Office has been extremely helpful and fair towards kayakers, but the issue with the landowner doesn't appear to be going away anytime soon. Until then, consider the Lower Elk a mandatory paddle out to a less heated take-out downstream, being quick and heads up when passing through the private property at the mouth.

Directions: Drive to the town of Clark on Hwy 129, and continue north over the bridge that crosses the Elk. Either risk the take-out at the bridge, or another sketchy take-out off of Hwy 64, downstream of the Willow Creek bridge, which is 2.1 miles from the turnoff. To get to the put-in, drive back to Hwy 129 and turn right. Continue for 5 miles until you reach a bridge that crosses Willow, parking at the right pullout.

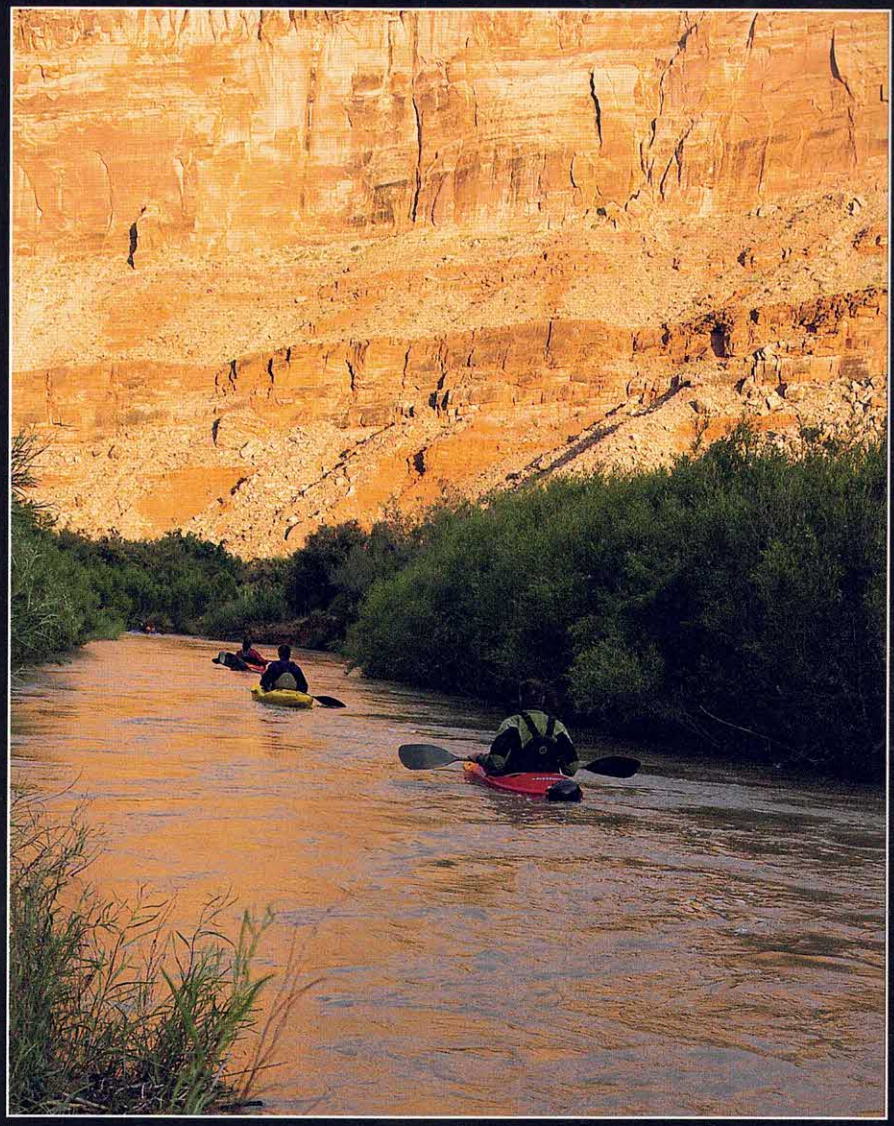
Slater Creek

Sometimes it's just too easy. "The falls is not marked from the road. You probably won't find it unless you have your gazetteer. It's marked on the gazetteer as 'Falls'," wrote latenightjonser, a proud member of the RCRE, on mountinbuzz.com. He's speaking of A.C. Slater falls northwest of Steamboat a majestic slide-to-30'-to-beautiful, beautiful pool. Right looked shallow so launch left. The entire river has amazing potential but in 2006 it was clogged up with lumber. The Routt boys will very likely have the entire run sussed out before you get there, so enquire with your enforcement buddy of choice when you are ready to put Zach Morris in a headlock.

Directions: Find Slater Creek north of Craig. Find the Falls marked in the Gazetteer off of 82 Rd. Go there and check this thing out, if not for anything else than to just huck A.C. Slater while wearing only your high school wrestling shoes and unitard (we also always recommend you wear a PFD).

CFS	500<min @ gauge
Class	V+
Quality	★★★★★
Gradient	slide to vert
Length	short
Season	May (early peak)
Gauge	Slater Fork nr Slater
Riv Access	near Baggs, WY

Alabama Dave ♦Routt County River Enforcement in full affect—sketchy



"I had been afraid of the awful presence of the river, which was the soul of the river, but through her I learned that my spirit shared in the spirit of all things."

-Rudolfo Anaya

King Solomon & Lil' Snake

King Solomon

This is a creek with a cool name and a short but memorable gorge that doesn't really classify as a, quote unquote, run per say. A crew from Steamboat and I accidentally (seriously) did what is thought to be the first descent of this creek and it was quite an adventure, but lacked classic whitewater. King Sols Balls is the series of rapids set in a fairly inaccessible gorge directly above the confluence with the Middle Little Snake. The exit to this gorge is a 20'er that lands on an undercut wall with a very, very thin line on the left. If this sounds appealing to you then this creek might be for you. If not, consider yourself in the vast majority of wilderness creekboaters and find your fun on Elk or Fish Creek.

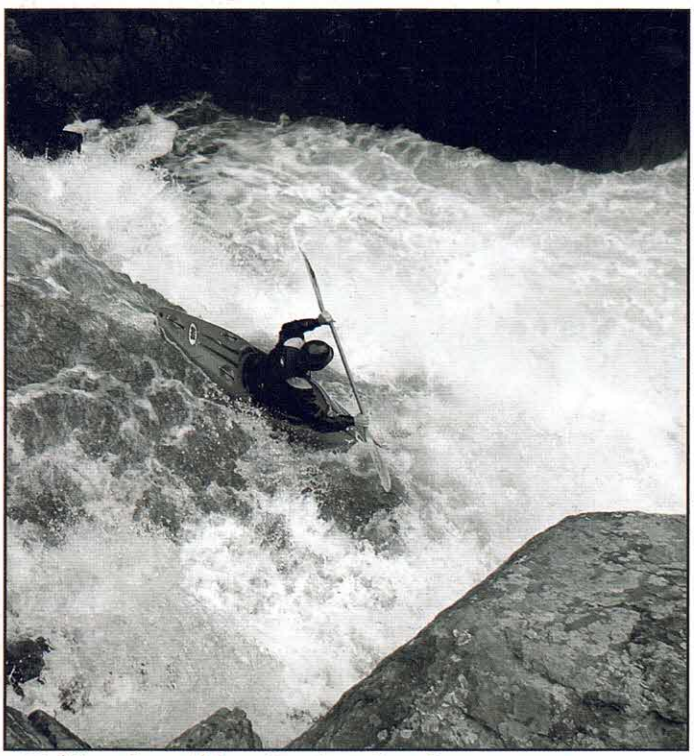
To add to an already not entirely enticing set of run characteristics, there is a long meandering paddle in just to get to the mile of steep wood choked rapids before King Sols Balls. One way to get around this might be to hike down Box Creek into the canyon off of Rd 129. The access issues surrounding this short hike are unknown because the property lines are unclear in that area. Be heads up and stealth if you choose to explore this route as it has not been tested to my knowledge, and as most Routt County locals carry firearms at all times.

Directions: Take Rd 129, North off of Hwy 40, and North of Steamboat towards the Upper Elk. Continue on Rd 129 past the Elk, past Steamboat Lake and all the way down to Bedrock Creek. There is an unmarked road that leads to the MF Little Snake just passed Bedrock Creek. Park at the end of this road and walk down the steep trail to mark the take-out eddy for both runs. To get to the put-in, drive back South on Rd 129 to FR 503 and go left. Put on at the first bridge, where FR 503 crosses King Solomon.

CFS	300<min
Class	flat or V+
Quality	★★
Gradient	330 fpm crux
Length	8.5 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	FR 503 bridge #1
Take-out	near Bedrock Creek

Middle Fork Little Snake

This is the creek that we were trying to paddle when we accidentally did an exploratory descent of King Solomon Creek. This is a run with a slightly longer set of rapids beginning below a hiking bridge. A run down the Lil' Snake will provide a strong group with steep, gorged up and wood choked exploratory paddling that you might be lusting after. If this is not your cup of tea, it is not your cup of tea. Some people like masochism, but there is so much other quality whitewater in the area that these runs really should only be relegated to those who have knocked off the entire list of Steamboat classics. There is definitely one solid 15' slide after the confluence with King Solomon that is fun. Below here it is a short paddle to the take-out.

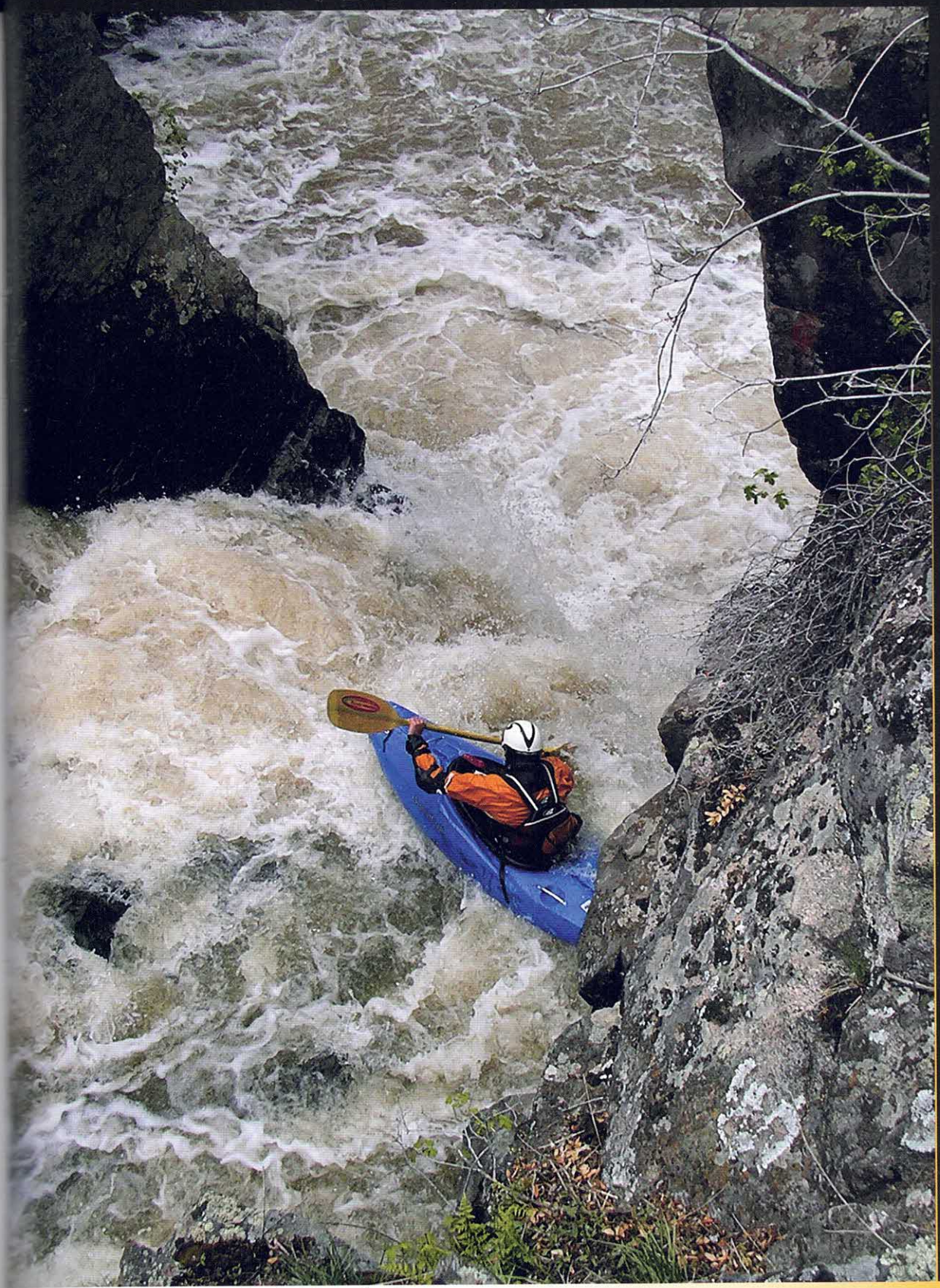


ES Kevin Fisher Middle Fork Little Snake Falls, high flow

Directions: The take-out is the same as King Solomon. Put on at the second bridge, where FR 503 crosses the Lil' Snake.

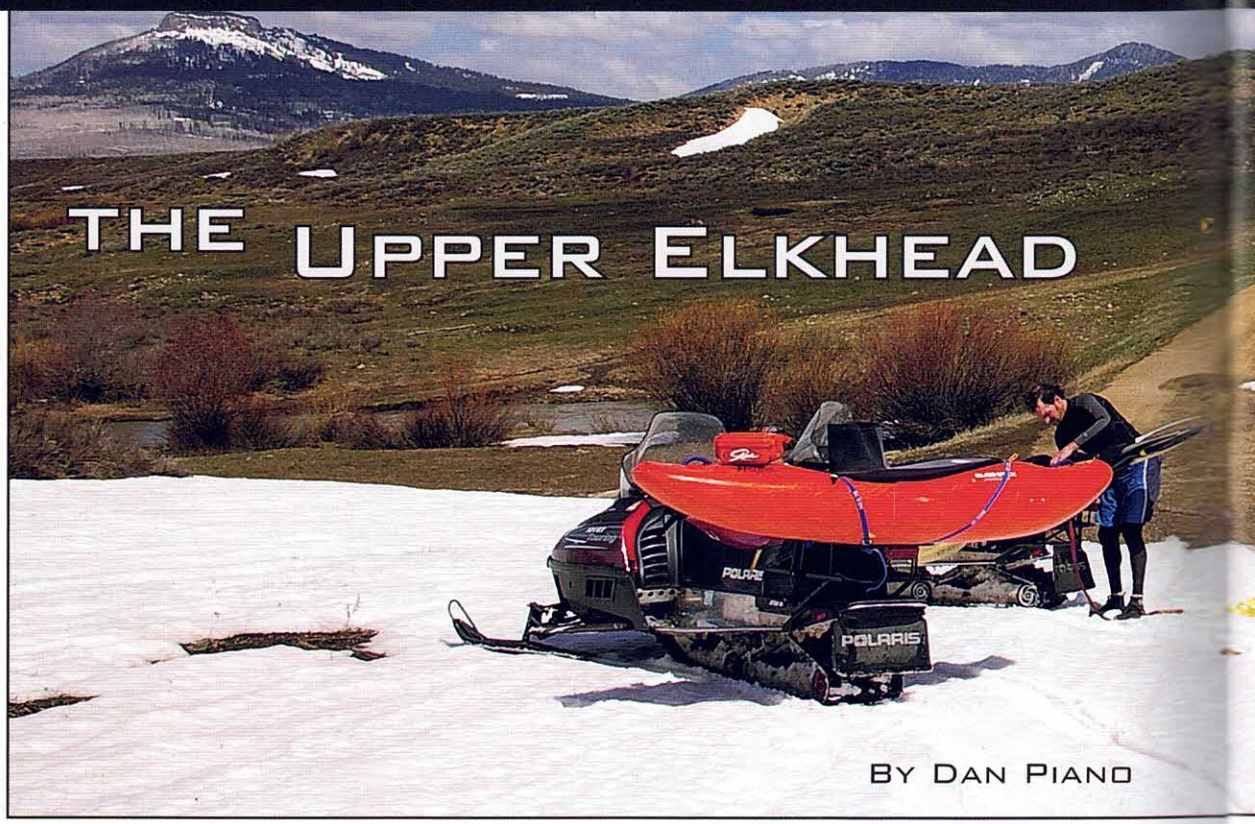
CFS	300<min
Class	V
Quality	★★★
Gradient	195 fpm action
Length	6.1 miles
Season	May, June
Gauge	visual
Put-in	FR 503 bridge #2
Take-out	near Bedrock Creek

We accidentally ran what is thought to be the first D of King Solomon, and we didn't realize it until we arrived at the gorge, and eventually the confluence with the creek we intended to run.



ES Kevin Dombey King Sol's Balls, King Solomon

THE UPPER ELKHEAD

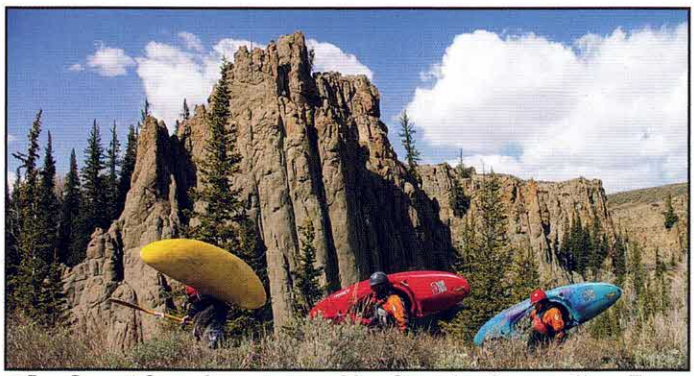


BY DAN PIANO

Cobra Squad members Adam Mayo, Kevin Thompson, Joe Carberry, Mike Geary, and myself uncovered yet another Colorado classic. Adam Mayo, local attorney and logistics coordinator, lead the charge for a first descent of the Elkhead River in West Routt. We all made some educated guesses and everything finally came up millhouse for our crew.

This eleven-hour journey started behind Johnny B's in the Paddler Magazine parking lot at 7:00 AM on May 29th. The five of us had an idea of what we were about to encounter but know one knew for sure. Using the latest mapping technologies to figure out the gradient our crew came to the conclusion that the Upper Elkhead was worthy of floating. After a six-mile snowmobile shuttle we found ourselves in California Park. The snow on the road conveniently ended at the put-in. From here we descended first creek for about seven miles and ultimately found ourselves paddling into the Upper Elkhead. As soon as we hit the Elkhead, the plot thickened as the gradient increased along with our heart rates.

The elusive 290 fpm section was coming. Every corner I rounded I couldn't help from thinking about possible waterfalls with awful landings and massive logs blocking the river waiting to tuck us in for the big sleep. The first canyon was fun class IV, similar to Willow Creek but with more scrub brush along the banks. The Elkhead began to drop out as we rounded an abrupt right-hand corner that lead us into the second gorge. This is where things got interesting. We all went on separate scouting missions to check out the blind gorge below. After about forty minutes of scouting Mike and Joe decided to step it up and run first rapid, the Enforcer.



CFS	200<min<400<best
Class	V<400<V+
Quality	★★★
Gradient	290 fpm crux
Length	11.7 miles
Season	May
Gauge	Elkhead abv Long Glch
Put-in	California Park
Take-out	56 Road

DAN PIANO ♦COBRA SQUAD MEMBERS MIKE GEARY, JOE CARBERRY, KEVIN THOMPSON AND ADAM MAYO GEAR UP THE SLEDS

DAN PIANO ♦LOG PORTAGE AFTER THE GOODS

Joe came in hot around the corner above the main drop, hit a submerged rock and was sent off the drop switch. He stayed calm and styled the rest of the mank backwards. Mike G, the "Enforcer" of Routt County River Enforcement was up next. Everything was going perfect for Mike until he dropped the falls that Joe just went over backwards. Mike hit an enormous diagonal hole that caused him to flip and ultimately swim one of the nastiest sections on the river. The team pulled through and got Mike out of the water. Mike was okay, but Mike was also boat-less, paddle-less, helmet-less, and eight miles from anything. The crew regrouped while Mike went downstream to look for his gear. As the team roped gear out of the canyon, Mike was downstream overwhelmed with elation—he had found his boat.

Joe had a spare paddle and we MacGyvered a helmet out of elbow pads and duct tape. At this point we rallied and pushed down the rest of the gorge. Joe once again stepped it up ad dialed another stout class V, Good Times. The exit of the gorge greeted us with approximately seven more miles of fun class III-IV boating all the way to the take-out. From the take-out we rallied back to the sleds for another frigid flip-flop shuttle and then went directly to the Highway Bar in Craig for celebratory beers at 9:30 pm.

Sometimes in life everything just comes together way better than it should. This was certainly one of those times. This mission was only completed because of new technology, solid planning, and a very experienced crew. If you ever go to the Upper Elkhead be prepared for a long day, and a big smile plastered to your face for the next five.

📷 Dan Piano 🚶 Mike Geary 💧Routt County River Enforcer stepping up to run the Enforcer

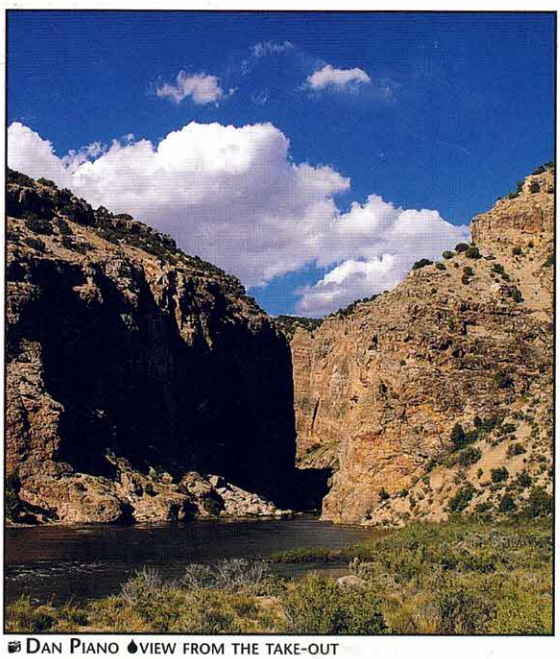
Cross Mountain Gorge

Flow	Minimum	Low	Medium	High
CFS	600	1300	2800	6000
Character	off season training	play, sun, camp	juicy play, still sun	big water special
Class	IV-	IV- (IV)	IV+ (Vs)	V (V+s)
Quality	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Gradient	60 fpm action			
Remoteness	committing, and in the *real* west			
Hitchability	poor, but okay with boaters			
Length	6.4 miles			
Season	March to August			
Gauge	Yampa near Maybell			
Put-in	East Cross Mountain Public Access (fee)			
Take-out	Deerlodge Park River Access			

A playboater's spring warm-up or one of Colorado's only real big water challenges? The answer to this query will rely mostly on the amount of the muddy desert water flowing through this beautiful and short gorge. Most expert boaters will want to bring their playboats at just about any level, but the moves definitely increase in excitement as flows cross over 2800 cfs. At flows less than 2000 cfs this is a solid but very manageable class IV adventure. The whitewater is continuous but short lived and competent paddlers who know the run can easily complete back to back runs within a single day. Once flows get over 6000 few paddlers will opt for the playboat, most will portage Osterizer, and few have the mental toughness to go for a second lap.

The first rapid is by the far the most ominous scout of the run. The sheer size of the holes in Osterizer, compared to most other holes, will deter only the bravest from charging hey diddle diddle. At medium flows there is a sneak down the right and at low to medium flows the scout is also on the right. At high flows the scout or likely portage must be done from river left. The next rapid on the run is the Snake Pit, complete with a *snaking* zigzag move through the upper portion and an awesome curling launch into the run-out of this fine rapid. Advanced playboaters will want to spend some time hiking this set in an attempt to throw various high-flying downstream wave maneuvers.

Beyond the Snake Pit things settle down, yet the action remains entertaining and many nice playspots can be found to prolong your time in this broken sandstone canyon. One large river wide hole lingers near the end of the run waiting to ensnare the unsuspecting. Although most of the whitewater challenge on this run consists merely of big waves and a few hefty holes to be dodged, it can become interesting at high water, especially for swimmers.

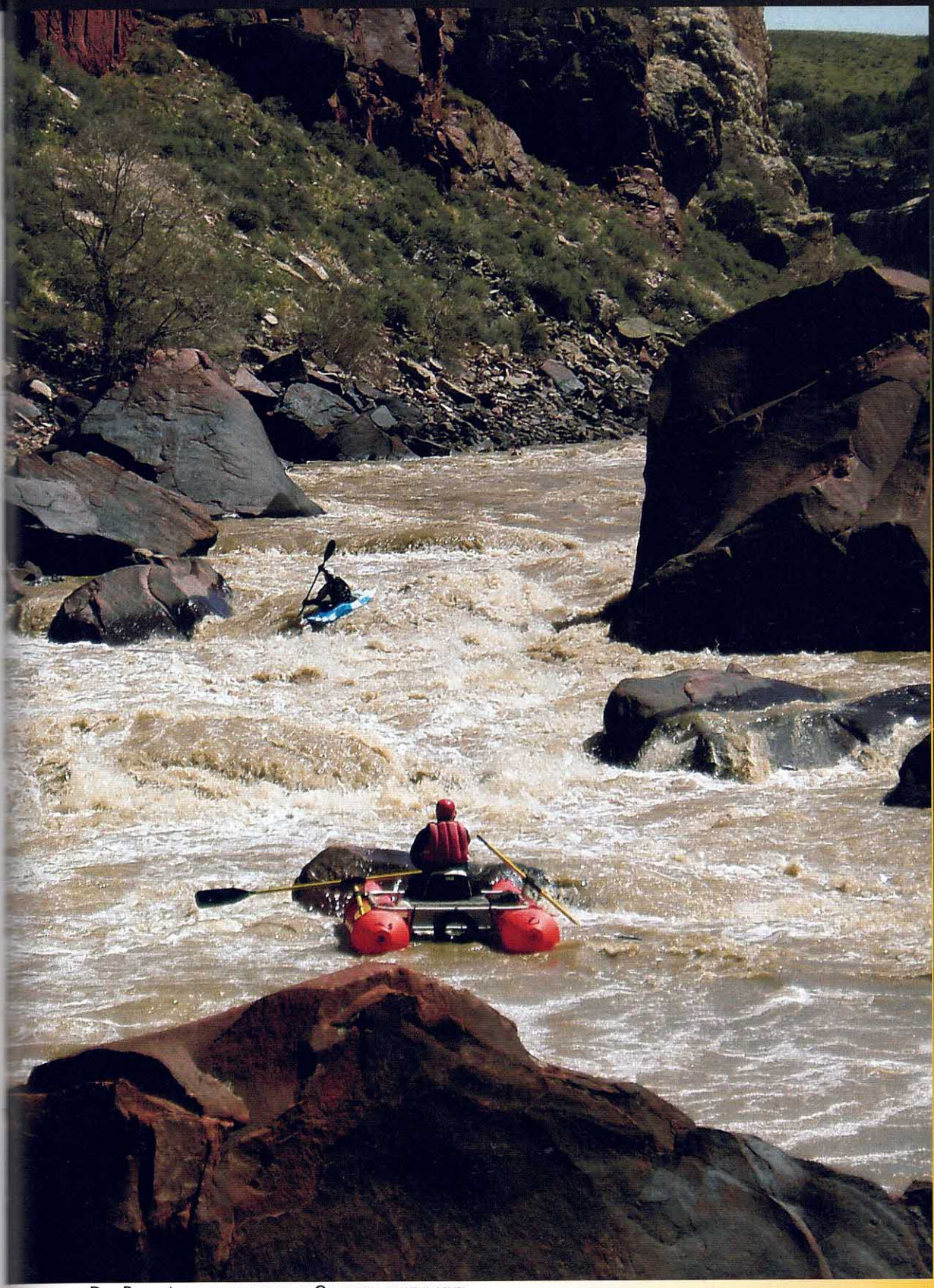


DAN PIANO ♦VIEW FROM THE TAKE-OUT

Directions

Most choose to camp at the put-in, which can be found by turning north onto the gravel Moffat 85 Rd, about 16 miles West of Maybell on Hwy 40. A large tree, actually the only tree anywhere near Hwy 40, sits at the turnoff. Drive 2.5 miles and take the left fork over the cattle guard, and continue to the East Cross Mountain Public Access (fee area). To reach the take-out, drive 1.7 miles west on Hwy 40, then turn right (North) onto Deerlodge Park Road. Drive 4.1 miles to the public river access take-out on the right. For a free camping option and/or a sweet view from the rim, drive 2.1 miles South from the take-out and turn left onto CR123 labeled South Cross Mountain Easement (4WD recommended).

Early season desert camping in the northwest corner of Colorado. Top notch play, high action rafting , and one of the premiere big water runs of the region welcomes dehydrated paddlers.



Yampa • Cross Mountain Gorge

Dan Piano ♦Looking upstream at Osterizer, playful level

Blue-Angel: To follow in close range the paddler in front of you through a rapid. Like an elite squadron of Navy aerial demonstration pilots. "Boof, or I'll land on your head."

Blunt: To carve across the face of a wave or hole, switch edges and throw the bow of your kayak down in the opposite direction using the dynamic force of the edge shift to perform a whipping cartwheel or become airborne, or air blunt. The blunt is the basis for aerial wave moves.

Blw: Short for below.

Bony: When a run does not have adequate flow to cover even the small rocks.

Boof: The onomatopoeia for the beautiful sound of landing a kayak flat after launching a strong forward stroke from a vertical drop.

Booty Beer: The ritual of drinking an alcoholic beverage from your kayaking footwear as penalty for swimming.

Breaking Wave: A wave that is stationary in the river, but also surging and breaking similar to an ocean wave.

Cartwheel: Likely to be the first freestyle move in your repertoire. The art of throwing the bow of your kayak sideways into the water bringing your stern into the air while the kayak slices around landing you in the opposite direction. Can be continued by slicing your stern into the water, bringing your bow out of the water and around back to how you started. Resembling the gymnastic move of the same name.

CFS: Cubic feet per second. The common measurement for the volume of water flowing in a riverbed at any given time.

CG: Short for campground. Often one of the most legal places to access a river.

Creek Boater: "A special breed of whitewater boater who prefers paddling steep little-known mountain creeks with a friend to slamdancing on overcrowded rivers. Although frequently criticized as being secretive, obnoxious control-freaks, creek boaters are in reality the renaissance men (and women) of whitewater paddling. The typical creek boater is sensitive, tasteful, intelligent, urbane, discreet, and totally fearless. The creek boater prefers his women hot, his beer cold and his steak rare. In that order." –William Nealy

Crk: Short for Creek.

Crux: The toughest, scariest and/ or defining section of a rapid or stretch of river.

Eddy line: The line made in the river where two currents, flowing in opposite directions, pass. Usually the dividing line between the upstream flow of an eddy and the downstream flow of the main current. Great for squirt boating and freestyle.

Eddy: A river feature where a downstream current is forced around an obstacle, such as a large rock or shoreline outcropping, forming a pocket of slack water or current moving back upstream.

Float-and-Drag: When a river or creek is so low that only sometimes are you floating on water, while at other unfortunate times you are pushing, pulling and dragging your craft downstream over the rocks.

Flooded Creek Style: A style of creek that is best when bankful or flooding.

FPM: Feet per mile. Used to designate the gradient or steepness of a river stretch.

Freestyle Kayaker: AKA play boater. A paddler who prefers controlled thrashing in a hole or on a wave to running entire river stretches - unless the stretch has multiple of the aforementioned holes and waves, splats and eddy lines. The good ones will be found flipping, blunting, and helixing on your head.

Gnar: The extremely difficult whitewater that expert paddlers actively seek out. A very addictive substance that can inadvertently contribute to the loss of jobs and girlfriends.

Helix: To perform an aerial inverted 360 degree spin while surfing a wave or hole.

Hole: A river feature in which water flows over an obstacle, such as a bedrock ledge or large boulder, creating a white and fluffy recirculating hydraulic. Fun for freestyle or downright terrifying depending on size and strength of recirculating currents.

Huck: To get in your kayak, settle your nerves and run something on the extreme high end of the difficulty scale such as a large waterfall, particularly powerful rapid or combination thereof. Used frequently to describe what you want to go do.

Hydraulic: When the river is trying to flow upstream against a ledge or other irregularity in the riverbed. The cause of much consternation and most swims from paddlers already possessing a roll. A keeper hydraulic may never let you go even when swimming.

Ice Cream: What you owe if you roll more than your friends. See page 587.

IK: Inflatable kayak, AKA ducky.

Lead-in: The entrance to a rapid or set of rapids, and if we say something about it then its probably tricky.

Loop: To perform a front flip in your kayak while surfing a hole or wave.

LZ: Landing zone. Also mistaken for the name of the big cascade on Upper South Boulder Creek, a la Colorado Rivers and Creeks description of its not so deep LZ.

Mank: A river stretch usually consisting of an uncomfortable combination of steep gradient, broken rock and low water conditions increasing the threat of becoming black and blue after capsizing.

Meat: The juiciest, most powerful, and often hardest and most dangerous line through a rapid. A place that beginners want to avoid and experts want to be, and subsequently clean their line. AKA the Hero Line.

Min: Short for minimum in reference to level of flow.

Nr. Short for near.

NR: Not recommended by the authors. Usually used in reference to the difficulty of a rapid or section of rapids which are navigable by only the bravest and most skilled paddlers. A run where the authors might pull a Wigston, and puke before putting on.

Otter slide: When you slide into the river in your kayak like an otter on his belly. Synonym – seal launch

Park-and-Huck: A steep section of river or creek where you can pull right up, throw on your gear and huck. Then walk right back up to your rig, put your street clothes on and drive away.

Park-and-Play: To drive up to a play feature, park your rig, suit up and throw down. Then be able to walk back to your rig, pop a cold one and play mack-daddy with the river bettys. "Did you see my loop? Do want a beer? Are you single? No?"

Piton: Bad. To crash the bow of a kayak into rocks off a vertical or sloping drop.

Portage: To put your tail between your legs, put your ego in check and walk around a rapid or section of river. Something that builds character and should be practiced regularly to show respect for the river. Also can refer to a hike in or out of a run.

Pourovers: A type of ledge hole, where non-aerated water pours over a rock or other irregularity in the river bed and creates a large hole with a recirculation that is best avoided.

Pre-scout: To scout a section of river before putting in for a run.

Put-in: Where you get in the river to start a run.

Read-and-run: A section or way of running the river in which the comfortable paddler does not need to exit his/her boat and scout to make a clean descent. This is entirely subjective and the authors do not claim to know where you will be comfortable paddling without scouting, or when it is safe. When in doubt, scout.

Res: Slang for reservoir.

River Left: When facing downstream the left side of the river or creek, including the shoreline.

River Right: When facing downstream the right side of the river or creek, including the shoreline.

Roll: The art of righting a capsized kayak. Originated by the native people of the far northern hemisphere in ocean kayaks. AKA Eskimo roll. Versions—combat roll, backdeck roll, battle roll, sushi roll, c-to-c and sweep roll.

Run-out: The last part of a rapid, usually below the crux and above the next eddy.

Scout: To analyze a rapid or section of river in preparation for a controlled descent. An art that is developed over years of training and practice, so start now.

Scrapey: A characteristic of a run where you will be scraping the bottom of your boat along the river or creek bottom a fair amount of the time. Not for those who are in love with their plastic.

Seal launch/slide: To slide down a rock, or other slope, and launch directly into the river. A technique which can be done for fun, or out of necessity when maneuvering in committing river gorges. Synonym—otter slide

Shuttle Bunny: A great honor bestowed upon the driver (often female) of a shuttle, often needed out of necessity of shuttle drive time, and/or access issues. Shuttle Bunnies should be treated extremely well, thanked repeatedly, and paid for with beer or other gifts of substantial value.

Sieve: Worse. A place where water drains a rock pile, only from underneath the surface of the water. Sometimes wide enough to swim through and sometimes not. Usually it's best not to find out. A place you could easily die.

Spin: When surfing a wave or hole to spin 360 degrees while the kayaks hull is still planing.

Splat: To grind the hull of your kayak across a dry rock, log or other semi-stationary object such as a raft. Best to determine the safety of said splat, before attempting.

Squirt boating: A style of paddling which involves shiny, incredibly low volume, fiberglass kayaks, hand paddles or at least a wood paddle and a desire to spend a fair bit of time swirling around underwater with the little fishes. Nearly all standard play boating moves emerged from squirt boating culture.

Stomp: What you do when you stick a boof, or a difficult line with precision and style, and usually ending with a fist pump. "Did you see me stomp that boof?"

Surf: To use the hull of your kayak to plane across the face of a river wave by carving back and forth. Also used to describe the controlled or out of control moments when paddlers are no longer making downstream progress due to a hole.

Surfers Left: When looking upstream, the left side of the river. On your left when you are surfing a river wave.

Surfers Right: When looking upstream, the right side of the river. On your right when you are surfing a river wave.

Take-out: Where cold beers are waiting for you to get out of the river after making a run.

Wave: Like an ocean wave but relatively stationary in the river and not moving downstream. Formed by minor riverbed irregularities. Fun to surf.

Run Difficulty by Chapter

Arizona	class	★	
Gila Lower Box	II	2	26
Verde Wilderness	II (IIIs)	3	44
Gila Wilderness Run	II+	3	24
Oak Creek Dry Creek to Cornville	III	3	50
Oak Creek Sedona to Red Rock	III	3	50
Gila Middle Box	III	4	24
Upper Tonto	III (IV)	2	36
Verde Beasley Flats	III (IV)	3	44
Salt River	III+	5	28
East Verde Wilderness Run	IV	3	42
Oak Creek Indian Gardens	IV	4	48
Grand Canyon	IV	5	56
Fossil Creek	IV (V-)	4	42
East Verde Doll Baby	IV (Vs)	4	40
Tonto Box Canyon	IV+	4	38
Santa Maria Lower Box	IV+ (Vs)	5	52
Santa Maria Upper Box	IV+ (Vs)	5	52
Tonto Hellsgate	V-	5	38
East Verde Park & Huck	V	3	40
Aqua Fria	V	5	46
Oak Creek Slide Rock	V	5	48
Christopher Creek	V+	5	32
Arkansas Drainage	**class**	**★**	
Pueblo Park	Freestyle	4	86
BV Park	Freestyle	5	72
Salida Park	Freestyle	5	80
Rincon Squirt	Squirt	5	82
Milk Run	II+	2	74
Salida to Pinnacle Rock	II+ (IIIs)	3	82
BV Lower Town	III	1	74
Fractions	III	3	72
Pinnacke Rock	III+	2	82
Royal Gorge	III+ (IV-)	4	84
Browns Canyon	III+ (IVs)	4	76
Pine Creek	III+ (V-)	3	68
Numbers	IV	5	70
Clear Creek Ark	V-	5	66
Grape Creek	V (P)	1	78
Lake Creek	V (P, V+x3)	5	62
NF South Arkansas	V+	2	78
Bighorn Mountains	**class**	**★**	
Clear Creek Town	IV-	3	92
Clear Creek Mosier Gulch	IV+	3	92
Clear Creek Canyon	V	4	90
SF Tongue	V	4	96
Tensleep	V	4	98
Shell Creek	V (V+x2, P)	4	96
Paint Rock Creek	V+	3	98
Cache La Poudre	**class**	**★**	
Bridges Take-Out Wave	Freestyle	3	104
Ultimate Squirt Spot	Squirt	5	104
Upper Rustic	II (IV)	2	112
Filter Plant	III-	3	104
Lower NF Poudre	III	2	102
Lower Mishawaka	III	3	106
Bridges	III (III+)	4	106
Lower Rustic	III+ (IV-x2)	4	112
Upper Mishawaka	IV-	4	106
Poudre Park	IV	5	106
Middle Narrows	IV (IV+x2)	4	108
Upper NF Poudre	IV (V-)	3	102
Little SF Poudre	IV+	2	110
Buckhorn Creek	V-	3	110
Lower Narrows	V	4	108
Upper Narrows	V	4	108
Joe Wright	V	4	120
Spencer Heights	V (NR)	4	118
Big South	V+	5	122
Central Mountains	**class**	**★**	
Gunnison Park	Freestyle	4	140
North Bridge to Gunnison Park	II	2	140
Lake Fork Gate to Red Bridge	II	2	142
Lake City Town	II+	1	142
Lower Taylor	II+ (III)	3	138
Gunnison Park to McCabes Lane	III- (III+)	2	140
Lake Fork Box	III	3	142
Cebolla Creek	III (P)	2	144
Taylor Canyon	III+	4	138
Lake Fork Canyon	III+ (IV+)	4	142
Lower Ruby & Dark Canyon	IV	3	128
Daisy Creek	V-	4	134
Upper East	V- (NR)	3	136
Slate River	V- (V)	3	132
Henson Creek	V- (V+, NR)	4	144
Upper Ruby Fork	V	3	128
Cottonwood	V	3	146
Oh Be Joyful	V	5	130
Middle Ruby Fork	V+	1	128
NF Slate	V+	4	134
Cinnamon Gorge	V+	4	146
Clarks Fork Yellowstone	**class**	**★**	
Lower Shoshone	III-	3	166
Main SF Shoshone	III- (IV)	3	170
Little Rock Creek	IV-	3	164
Sunlight	IV	3	154
Shoshone River	IV (IV+x4)	5	166
Day Stretch	IV (V+)	4	152
Grinell Creek	IV+	2	154
Crandall Creek	IV+	4	154
Lower Clarks Fork	IV+	4	164
Cabin Creek	V	3	170
Deer Creek	V	3	170
Honeymoon	V (V+s)	5	152
Stix and Stones	V+ (NRs,Ps)	4	150
The Box	V+ (NRs,Ps)	5	156
Crystal River	**class**	**★**	
Catherine Store Roaring Fork	II+	4	174
Avalanche Down	III	3	174
Crystal Mill Falls	III (IV-,V)	3	190
Lower Bogan	III+ (NR)	2	178
Bogan Canyon	IV-	3	178

Muddy Creek NF Gunnison	IV+	3	196
Narrows	IV+	4	176
South Fork Crystal	V	4	190
Upper Yule	V (P)	2	196
Crystal Gorge	V (V+)	5	184
North Fork Crystal	V (V+)	5	192
Meatgrinder	V+	4	176
Yule Creek	V+	5	180
Dolores	**class**	**★**	
Ledges	Freestyle	4	202
Slickrock Canyon	II+ (III)	4	204
Gateway	III- (IV+)	4	208
San Miguel Sawpit	III	2	202
Norwood Canyon	III	3	202
Stoner Run	III	5	200
Dolores Canyon	III (IV+)	4	204
San Miguel Keystone Canyon	V- (V+)	4	202
Rico Falls	V	3	200
Durango	**class**	**★**	
Farmington WWP	Freestyle	2	224
Smelter Park	Freestyle	4	222
Santa Rita & Big Kahuna	Freestyle	5	222
Bakers Bridge to 32nd Street Park	I+	2	220
Eureka to Howardsville	II	2	244
Silverton Daily	III-	3	244
32nd Street to Smelter	III+	3	220
Lower South Mineral	III+	3	244
Cement Creek	IV-	3	244
Hermosa Creek	IV	2	238
Cascade Creek	IV+ (P)	5	236
Upper Animas	IV+ (V-x3)	5	228
2nd Gorge Lime	V- (V+)	4	240
Miller Creek	V	2	218
La Plata Falls	V	3	218
Needle Creek	V	3	232
Cascade Creek Slot	V	3	238
Rockwood Box	V	5	228
Los Pinos	V (NRs,Ps)	4	212
1st Gorge Lime	V (V+)	5	242
Falls Creek	V+	4	218
Canyon Creek	V+	4	232
South Mineral Creek	V+	4	246
Vallecito Creek	V+	5	214
Pandora's Box	V+	5	226
East Utah	**class**	**★**	
Cisco to Hittle Bottom	I	2	262
White River Floats	II	3	254
Labyrinth	II	4	262
Green River Daily	II+	3	256
Lower San Juan	II+	3	270
Gates of Lodore	III	4	252
Desolation Canyon	III	5	256
Moab Daily	III-	3	262
Escalante River	III- (P)	5	268
Yampa Canyon	III (III+)	4	250
Westwater Canyon	III+ (IV-)	5	258
Cataract Canyon	IV	5	264
Upper South White	V+ (NR)	4	254
Front Range	**class**	**★**	
Estes Park WWP	Freestyle	2	304
Lyons Town & Park	Freestyle	5	292
NSV Apple Valley	II+	2	292
Boulder Park & Town	III	3	282
NSV Shelbys Cottages	III	3	294
Alto Alto	IV	3	280
Lower Big Thompson	IV	4	300
Lower Boulder Canyon	IV (IV+,P)	3	282
Left Hand Creek	IV+	2	294
Little Tommy	IV+ (P)	1	304
Lower South Boulder	IV+ (Vx3)	4	276
Upper Boulder Canyon	V-	3	284
NSV Proving Grounds	V-	4	294
The Source	V	4	286
Middle Boulder Canyon	V+	1	284
Dream Canyon	V+	2	284
Eldorado Canyon	V+	4	274
Big Thompson	V+	4	300
South Saint Vrain	V+	5	290
Jasper Creek	V+ (NR)	4	288
Upper South Boulder	V+ (NRs)	5	278
North Saint Vrain	V+ (NRs, P)	5	296
Upper Upper Boulder Canyon	NR	1	284
Rocky Mountain National Park	NR	1	304
Greater Denver	**class**	**★**	
Santa Fe & Mississippi Park & Play	Freestyle	3	320
Golden Park	Freestyle	3	322
Union WWP	Freestyle	4	320
Confluence Park	Freestyle	4	322
Lawson Hole	Freestyle	5	330
Deckers	II+	2	308
Idaho Springs to Kermits	II+	2	330
South Denver Beginner Float	III-	2	320
Waterton	III (III+)	3	310
Eleven-Mile Canyon	III (IV+,Vs)	4	316
Foxton	III+	3	308
SF South Platte Below Cheesman	IV- (P)	2	310
Dumont	IV	4	330
Upper Clear Creek	IV (IV+)	3	328
Lower Clear Creek	IV+ (V-)	4	326
Bailey Canyon	IV+ (Vs)	4	314
Bear Creek	IV+ (V-s)	4	318
Turkey Creek	V-	2	318
Woods Creek	V- (V)	2	334
Black Rock	V- (Vx2)	4	328
West Fork Clear Creek	V	4	332
Cheeseman Canyon	V (NR)	4	316
Silverplume	V+	1	334
Headwaters of the Colorado	**class**	**★**	
Breckenridge Park	Freestyle	2	340
Vail Park	Freestyle	4	366
South Canyon	Freestyle	5	376
Dotsero	I (IIs)	3	352

Run Difficulty by Chapter

Lower Eagle	II (IIIx2)	2	370
Green Mountain Canyon	II+	3	344
Burns to Sweetwater	II+	3	352
Roaring Fork Cemetery	II+	3	376
Two Rivers Park Down	III-	1	376
Glenwood Canyon Grizzly	III-	3	372
Upper Eagle	III	2	370
Pumphouse	III	3	350
State Bridge to Burns	III	3	350
Upper Gore Creek	III	3	366
Minturn Slalom Course	III	3	368
Blue River Source	III (V)	2	340
Upper Blue	III+	2	342
Glenwood Canyon Shoshone	III+	4	372
Sweetwater Creek	IV-	1	354
Middle Down Tenmile Creek	IV-	3	338
Fraser Canyon	IV-	3	344
Lower Gore Creek	IV-	3	366
KLSPS	IV	3	342
Afternoon Adventure Tenmile Creek	IV+	2	338
Upper Upper Gore Creek	IV+	2	366
Byers Canyon	IV+	3	344
Eagle Source	IV+	3	356
Dowd Chute	IV+	4	368
Fish Ladders & Black Gore Gorge	IV+ (V, NR)	2	364
Grizzly Creek	V-	2	372
Gilman Gorge	V- (V)	4	358
Gore Canyon	V- (Vx3)	5	346
Alkali Creek	V	2	354
Hidden Falls	V	2	360
Upper Tenmile Creek	V	3	338
Vail Pass Black Gore	V	3	364
Homestake Creek	V	5	356
Barrel Springs	V (NR)	4	372
The White Stripe	V+	3	340
Rock Creek	V+	3	354
Piney River	V+	4	354
Cross Creek	V+	4	360
I-80 WY	**class**	**★**	
Green River Park	Freestyle	4	380
Jackson Hole	**class**	**★**	
Station Creek	Freestyle	3	390
Big Friendly Giant	Freestyle	4	392
Burrito & Taco	Freestyle	5	390
Kings Wave	Freestyle	5	390
Big Kahuna & Lunch Counter	Freestyle	5	392
Snake River Ranch to East Table	I	2	388
Snake River Wilson Bridge	II	3	386
Snake River Grand Teton NP	II	4	384
Snake River Moose Visitor Center	II	4	386
Snake River South Park Bridge	II	4	386
Granite Creek	II (III)	4	398
Lower Greys River	II (III+)	2	396
Henrys Fork	II (Vs)	3	410
Snake River Yellowstone Boundry	III	3	384
Hoback River	III	4	394
Alpine Canyon	III (III+x3)	4	388
South Fork Buffalo	III (IV-)	3	402
Falls River	III+	3	408
Upper Granite Creek	III+ (IVs)	2	398
Upper Greys River	IV	3	396
Crystal Creek	IV	3	400
Gros Ventre	IV	4	400
Bitch Creek	IV (V)	4	408
McCoy Creek	IV+	3	396
Teton River	V-(Vx4)	5	406
Blackrock Creek	V	3	402
Upper South Fork Buffalo	V	3	402
Lower Mesa Falls	V	5	410
Teton Creek	V (NRs,Ps)	2	410
New Mexico	**class**	**★**	
Chama Wilderness	II+ (III)	4	414
Chama Day Stretch	III	3	414
Pilar	III+	4	426
Lower Taos Box	III+ (IVx2)	3	426
Guadalupe	IV (NR)	3	434
Upper Chama Canyon	IV+	3	414
Red River	IV+	3	424
Santa Cruz	IV+	4	434
Rio de los Trampas	V	1	434
Upper Taos Box	V	4	422
Rio Embudo	V (V+)	5	430
Rio Pueblo	V (V+, NRs)	4	428
Toltec Gorge	V+ (NRs,Ps)	2	424
Rio Brazos	V+ (NRs,Ps)	5	416
North Platte	**class**	**★**	
Casper WWP	Freestyle	4	446
Northgate Canyon	III+ (IV-)	3	442
Encampment River	IV+	4	440
Bluegrass creek	V	4	444
Roaring Fork	V+	4	438
North Utah	**class**	**★**	
Ogden Park	Freestyle	3	454
Riverdale Wave	Freestyle	5	454
Logan Third to Second Dam	III-	3	452
Lower Logan	III- (III+)	3	452
Cataract Gorge NF Duchesne	III (NR,V+)	4	464
Logan Ricks Springs	IV-	4	452
North Fork Duchesne Source	IV	2	464
Big Cottonwood Creek Catch Pond	IV	3	456
Little Cottonwood Heights	IV	3	456
Lake Fork River	IV	3	468
Little Deer Creek	IV (V-,P)	4	466
Black Canyon Bear River	IV (V)	4	450
Uinta River	IV (V,V+)	3	468
Blackfoot River	IV (Vs)	3	450
Upper Provo Slate Gorge	IV (Vx3)	4	462
Logan Staircase	IV+	4	452
Ogden River	IV+	4	454
Lower Slate Gorge	IV+	4	462
Sixth Water Creek	V-	3	458
Big Cottonwood Storm Mountain	V	3	456
Little Cottonwood Canyon Hellgate	V	3	456
Upper Provo Falls	V (V+)	4	460

Pagosa Zone	class	★	
Wagon Wheel Gap	II	3	474
Pagosa Springs WWP & Town	II (III-)	3	484
Lower SF Rio Grande	III-	2	474
East Fork San Juan	III- (IV)	3	484
Upper Rio Grande	III	3	474
Mesa Canyon	III	3	484
Conejos Pinnacle Gorge	III (IV)	3	474
Piedra River	IV (V-)	4	486
Wolf Creek	V-(NR)	2	478
Treasure Canyon	V (Px2)	4	472
West Fork San Juan	V (V+)	4	480
South Fork Rio Grande	V+	3	476
Upper East Fork San Juan	V+	3	478
Roaring Fork	**class**	**★**	
Lower Woody Creek	III+	3	496
Upper Woody Creek	III+	3	496
Toothache	IV-	3	496
Lower Fryingpan	IV-	3	498
Castle Creek	IV+	4	490
Slaughterhouse	IV+	5	494
Upper Fryingpan	IV+ (V-)	4	498
Fryingpan's Lime Creek	V- (NR,Ps)	3	500
North Fork Fryingpan	V	3	498
Roaring Fork Grottos	V+	3	492
Upper Roaring Fork	V+ (NRs)	3	490
San Rafael Swell	**class**	**★**	
Little Grand Canyon San Rafael	I+	4	508
Muddy Creek	II+	5	504
Huntington	III+ (IV)	3	512
Straight Canyon	IV-	4	510
Left Fork Huntington	IV	5	512
Black Boxes	IV (P,V)	5	506
Fremont	V (NRs, Ps)	4	504
Virgin River	**class**	**★**	
Virgin River Gorge	III	3	520
Zion Narrows	III+ (IV)	5	516
Temple of Sinawava	IV+	4	520
Timpoweap Canyon	V (V+)	5	522
Western Slope	**class**	**★**	
Ridgeway Park	Freestyle	3	542
Lucky 7	Freestyle	3	554
Silo Hole	Freestyle	3	552
5th Street Wave	Freestyle	4	552
M-Wave	Freestyle	5	540
Fluffy Muffin	Freestyle	5	542
Big Sur	Freestyle	5	556
GJ Town	II+	2	550
Lower Gunnison	II+	2	550
Loma Ruby Horsethief	II+	3	550
Plauteau Creek	III	3	558
Gunnison Gorge	III+	4	536
Buzzard Creek	IV	2	560
North Fork Gunnison	IV-	2	544
Uncompahgre Box	IV+	2	538
Paonia Dam	NR	2	544
Lower Cimarron	V	4	526
Uncompahgre Qualtiy Quickie	V	4	538
Uncompahgre Southside	V-	2	538
Glade Park Potholes	V-	2	560
Black Canyon	V (NRs,Ps)	5	528
Smith Fork	V (P)	1	544
Escalante Creek	V (V+)	5	546
Kannah Creek	V+	2	560
Big Cimarron	V+ (NRs,P)	4	526
Wind River Range	**class**	**★**	
Popo Agie Sinks Run	V	4	564
Warm Springs Creek	V	4	578
New Fork	V (V+s)	4	578
Popo Agie Falls Run	V+ (NRs)	4	564
Bull Lake Creek	V+ (NRs,Ps)	5	568
North Fork Popo Agie	V+ (NRs,Ps)	4	566
Yampa	**class**	**★**	
Steamboat WWP	Freestyle	5	588
Steamboat Town	III	3	588
Lower Elk River	III	4	590
Cross Mountain Gorge	IV- (IV+)	5	600
Willow Creek	IV+	4	592
Mad Creek	V	3	592
Middle Fork Little Snake	V	3	596
Upper Elkhead River	V	3	598
Upper Fish Creek	V	5	584
Lower Fish Creek	V-	5	584
Upper Elk River	V (V+)	4	590
King Solomon	V+	2	596
Slater Creek	V+	5	594
North Fork Fish Creek	V+ (NRs)	4	586

Despite this list's best intentions, it is an impossible feat to accurately compare runs in order of difficulty, or to compare their quality (see page 611). The difficulty of a run is entirely subjective to flow levels, air temperature and weather conditions. Difficulty is also affected by less conscious factors such as the pace of the day, group dynamic, individual comfort on different types of whitewater and past experiences.

This list has some major benefits that justify including it in the guide. It's the best place to start planning for a summer of exploration, whether the exploration is paddling every freestyle feature in the state, finding the highest quality local class III runs, or planning a weekend or week long paddling vacation. It can be used to help you choose the runs that you want to hit next, and filter through the sections that you have no desire to paddle, much more quickly.

When determining the difficulty and the quality for this list, we assumed that all of these sections were at medium flow. The only time we didn't use the medium flow as our standard was when the runs optimal flow was at a different level, such as low. In those circumstances we used the optimal flow level instead. Use this list to guide you to the type of runs you are looking for, and use the descriptions for the most accurate beta.

Quality by Run Difficulty

Five Star Sections (★★★★★)	class	★	
Freestyle		★★★★★	
Big Kahuna & Lunch Counter	Freestyle	5	392
Big Sur	Freestyle	5	556
Burrito & Taco	Freestyle	5	390
BV Park	Freestyle	5	72
Fluffy Muffin	Freestyle	5	542
Kings Wave	Freestyle	5	390
Lawson Hole	Freestyle	5	330
Lyons Town & Park	Freestyle	5	292
M-Wave	Freestyle	5	540
Riverdale Wave	Freestyle	5	454
Salida Park	Freestyle	5	80
Santa Rita & Big Kahuna	Freestyle	5	222
South Canyon	Freestyle	5	376
Steamboat WWP	Freestyle	5	588
Rincon Squirt	Squirt	5	82
Ultimate Squirt Spot	Squirt	5	104
Beginner		★★★★★	
Little Grand Canyon San Rafael	I+	5	508
Muddy Creek	II+	5	504
Intermediate		★★★★★	
Escalante River	III- (P)	5	268
Desolation Canyon	III	5	256
Stoner Run	III	5	200
Salt River	III+	5	28
Westwater Canyon	III+ (IV-)	5	258
Zion Narrows	III+ (IV)	5	516
Advanced		★★★★★	
Cross Mountain Gorge	IV- (IV+)	5	600
Cataract Canyon	IV	5	264
Grand Canyon	IV	5	56
Left Fork Huntington	IV	5	512
Numbers	IV	5	70
Poudre Park	IV	5	106
Shoshone River	IV (IV+x4)	5	166
Black Boxes	IV (P,V)	5	506
Slaughterhouse	IV+	5	494
Cascade Creek	IV+ (P)	5	236
Santa Maria Lower Box	IV+ (Vs)	5	52
Santa Maria Upper Box	IV+ (Vs)	5	52
Upper Animas	IV+ (V-x3)	5	228
Expert		★★★★★	
Clear Creek Ark	V-	5	66
Lower Fish Creek	V-	5	584
Tonto Hellsgate	V-	5	38
Gore Canyon	V- (Vx3)	5	346
Teton River	V- (Vx4)	5	406
Aqua Fria	V	5	46
Homestake Creek	V	5	356
Lower Mesa Falls	V	5	410
Oak Creek Slide Rock	V	5	48
Oh Be Joyful	V	5	130
Rockwood Box	V	5	228
Upper Fish Creek	V	5	584
1st Gorge Lime	V (V+)	5	242
Crystal Gorge	V (V+)	5	184
Escalante Creek	V (V+)	5	546
North Fork Crystal	V (V+)	5	192
Rio Embudo	V (V+)	5	430
Timpoweap Canyon	V (V+)	5	522
Big South	V (V+s)	5	122
Honeymoon	V (V+s)	5	152
Lake Creek	V (V+x3,P)	5	62
Black Canyon	V (NRs,Ps)	5	528
Christopher Creek	V+	5	32
Pandoras Box	V+	5	226
South Saint Vrain	V+	5	290
Vallecito Creek	V+	5	214
Yule Creek	V+	5	180
Upper South Boulder	V+ (NRs)	5	278
North Saint Vrain	V+ (NRs,P)	5	296
Bull Lake Creek	V+ (NRs,Ps)	5	568
Rio Brazos	V+ (NRs,Ps)	5	416
The Box	V+ (NRs,Px6)	5	156
Four Star Sections (★★★★)	**class**	**★**	
Freestyle		★★★★	
5th Street Wave	Freestyle	4	552
Big Friendly Giant	Freestyle	4	392
Casper WWP	Freestyle	4	446
Green River Park	Freestyle	4	380
Gunnison Park	Freestyle	4	140
Ledges	Freestyle	4	202
Pueblo Park	Freestyle	4	86
Smelter Park	Freestyle	4	222
Union WWP	Freestyle	4	320
Vail Park	Freestyle	4	366
Beginner		★★★★	
Labyrinth	II	4	262
Snake River Grand Teton NP	II	4	384
Snake River Moose Visitor Center	II	4	386
Snake River South Park Bridge	II	4	386
Granite Creek	II (III)	4	398
Catherine Store Roaring Fork	II+	4	174
Chama Wilderness	II+ (III)	4	414
Slickrock Canyon	II+ (III)	4	204
Intermediate		★★★★	
Gateway	III- (IV+)	4	208
Gates of Lodore	III	4	252
Hoback River	III	4	394
Gila Middle Box	III	4	24
Bridges	III (III+)	4	106
Yampa Canyon	III (III+)	4	250
Alpine Canyon	III (III+x3)	4	388
Dolores Canyon	III (IV+)	4	204
Cataract Gorge NF Duchesne	III (NR,V+)	4	464
Eleven-Mile Canyon	III (IV+,Vs)	4	316
Glenwood Canyon Shoshone	III+	4	372

Gunnison Gorge	III+	4	536
Pilar	III+	4	426
Taylor Canyon	III+	4	138
Royal Gorge	III+ (IV-)	4	84
Browns Canyon	III+ (IVs)	4	76
Lower Rustic	III+ (IV-x2)	4	112
Lake Fork Canyon	III+ (IV+)	4	142
Advanced	★★★★		
Logan Ricks Springs	IV-	4	452
Straight Canyon	IV-	4	510
Upper Mishawaka	IV-	4	106
Dumont	IV	4	330
Gros Ventre	IV	4	400
Lower Big Thompson	IV	4	300
Oak Creek Indian Gardens	IV	4	48
Middle Narrows	IV (IV+x2)	4	108
Fossil Creek	IV (V-)	4	42
Piedra River	IV (V-)	4	486
Little Deer Creek	IV (V-,P)	4	466
Bitch Creek	IV (V)	4	408
Black Canyon Bear River	IV (V)	4	450
East Verde Doll Baby	IV (Vs)	4	40
Upper Provo Slate Gorge	IV (Vx3)	4	462
Day Stretch	IV (V+)	4	152
Castle Creek	IV+	4	490
Crandall Creek	IV+	4	154
Dowd Chute	IV+	4	368
Logan Staircase	IV+	4	452
Lower Clarks Fork	IV+	4	164
Lower Slate Gorge	IV+	4	462
Narrows	IV+	4	176
Ogden River	IV+	4	454
Santa Cruz	IV+	4	434
Temple of Sinawava	IV+	4	520
Tonto Box Canyon	IV+	4	38
Willow Creek	IV+	4	592
Encampment River	IV+	4	440
Lower Clear Creek	IV+ (V-)	4	326
Upper Fryingpan	IV+ (V-)	4	498
Bear Creek	IV+ (V-s)	4	318
Bailey Canyon	IV+ (V-x2,V)	4	314
Lower South Boulder	IV+ (Vx3)	4	276
Expert	★★★★		
Daisy Creek	V-	4	134
NSV Proving Grounds	V-	4	294
Gilman Gorge	V- (V)	4	358
Black Rock	V- (Vx2)	4	328
2nd Gorge Lime	V- (V+)	4	240
San Miguel Keystone Canyon	V- (V+)	4	202
Henson Creek	V- (V+,NR)	4	144
Bluegrass creek	V	4	444
Clear Creek Canyon	V	4	90
Joe Wright	V	4	120
Lower Cimarron	V	4	526
Lower Narrows	V	4	108
Popo Agie Sinks Run	V	4	564
SF Tongue	V	4	96
South Fork Crystal	V	4	190
Tensleep	V	4	98
The Source	V	4	286
Uncompahgre Qualtiy Quickie	V	4	538
Upper Narrows	V	4	108
Upper Taos Box	V	4	422
Warm Springs Creek	V	4	578
West Fork Clear Creek	V	4	332
Treasure Canyon	V (Px2)	4	472
Upper Elk River	V (V+)	4	590
Upper Provo Falls	V (V+)	4	460
West Fork San Juan	V (V+)	4	480
New Fork	V (V+s)	4	578
Rio Pueblo	V (V+,NRs)	4	428
Shell Creek	V (V+x2,P)	4	96
Barrel Springs	V (NR)	4	372
Spencer Heights	V (NR)	4	118
Cheeseman Canyon	V (NRs)	4	316
Fremont	V (NRs,Ps)	4	504
Los Pinos	V (NRs,Ps)	4	212
Big Thompson	V+	4	300
Canyon Creek	V+	4	232
Cinnamon Gorge	V+	4	146
Cross Creek	V+	4	360
Eldorado Canyon	V+	4	274
Falls Creek	V+	4	218
Meatgrinder	V+	4	176
NF Slate	V+	4	134
Piney River	V+	4	354
Roaring Fork	V+	4	438
Slater Creek	V+	4	594
South Mineral Creek	V+	4	246
Jasper Creek	V+ (NR)	4	288
Upper South White	V+ (NR)	4	254
North Fork Fish Creek	V+ (NRs)	4	586
Popo Agie Falls Run	V+ (NRs)	4	564
Big Cimarron	V+ (NRs,P)	4	526
Stix and Stones	V+ (NRs,Ps)	4	150
North Fork Popo Agie	V+ (NRs,Ps)	4	566

Three Star Sections (★★★)	**class**	**★**	
Freestyle		**★★★**	
Bridges Take-Out Wave	Freestyle	3	104
Confluence Park	Freestyle	3	322
Golden Park	Freestyle	3	322
Lucky 7	Freestyle	3	554
Ogden Park	Freestyle	3	454
Ridgeway Park	Freestyle	3	542
Santa Fe & Mississippi Park & Play	Freestyle	3	320
Silo Hole	Freestyle	3	552
Station Creek	Freestyle	3	390

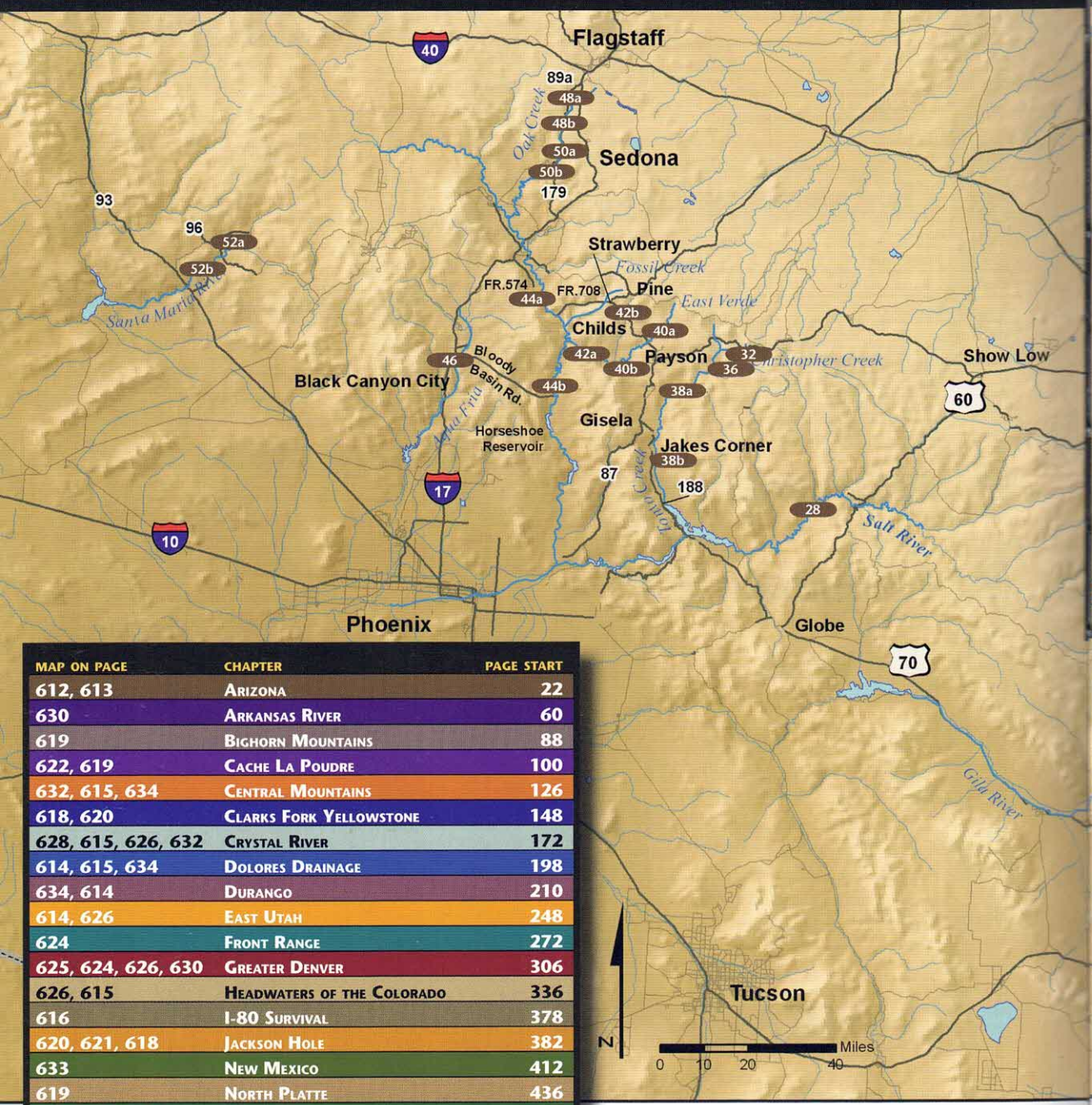
Quality by Run Difficulty

Beginner		★★★	
Dotsero	I (IIs)	3	352
Snake River Wilson Bridge	II	3	386
Wagon Wheel Gap	II	3	474
White River Floats	II	3	254
Pagosa Springs WWP & Town	II (III-)	3	484
Verde Wilderness	II (IIIs)	3	44
Henrys Fork	II (Vs)	3	410
Burns to Sweetwater	II+	3	352
Gila Wilderness Run	II+	3	24
Green Mountain Canyon	II+	3	344
Green River Daily	II+	3	256
Loma Ruby Horsethief	II+	3	550
Lower San Juan	II+	3	270
Roaring Fork Cemetery	II+	3	376
Lower Taylor	II+ (III)	3	138
Salida to Pinnacle Rock	II+ (IIIs)	3	82
Intermediate		**★★★**	
Glenwood Canyon Grizzly	III-	3	372
Logan Third to Second Dam	III-	3	452
Lower Shoshone	III-	3	166
Moab Daily	III-	3	262
Silverton Daily	III-	3	244
Filter Plant	III-	3	104
Lower Logan	III- (III+)	3	452
East Fork San Juan	III- (IV)	3	484
Main SF Shoshone	III- (IV)	3	170
Boulder Park & Town	III	3	282
Chama Day Stretch	III	3	414
Fractions	III	3	72
Lake Fork Box	III	3	142
Lower Elk River	III	3	590
Lower Mishawaka	III	3	106
Mesa Canyon	III	3	484
Minturn Slalom Course	III	3	368
Norwood Canyon	III	3	202
NSV Shelbys Cottages	III	3	294
Oak Creek Dry Creek to Cornville	III	3	50
Oak Creek Sedona to Red Rock	III	3	50
Plauteau Creek	III	3	558
Pumphouse	III	3	350
Snake River Yellowstone Boundry	III	3	384
State Bridge to Burns	III	3	350
Steamboat Town	III	3	588
Upper Gore Creek	III	3	366
Upper Rio Grande	III	3	474
Virgin River Gorge	III	3	520
Avalanche Down	III	3	174
Waterton	III (III+)	3	310
South Fork Buffalo	III (IV-)	3	402
Crystal Mill Falls	III (IV-,V)	3	190
Conejos Pinnacle Gorge	III (IV)	3	474
Verde Beasley Flats	III (IV)	3	44
32nd Street to Smelter	III+	3	220
Falls River	III+	3	408
Foxton	III+	3	308
Lower South Mineral	III+	3	244
Lower Woody Creek	III+	3	496
Upper Woody Creek	III+	3	496
Northgate Canyon	III+ (IV-)	3	442
Huntington	III+ (IV)	3	512
Lower Taos Box	III+ (IVx2)	3	426
Pine Creek	III+ (V-)	3	68
Advanced		**★★★**	
Bogan Canyon	IV-	3	178
Cement Creek	IV-	3	244
Clear Creek Town WY	IV-	3	92
Fraser Canyon	IV-	3	344
Little Rock Creek	IV-	3	164
Lower Fryingpan	IV-	3	498
Lower Gore Creek	IV-	3	366
Middle Down Tenmile Creek	IV-	3	338
Toothache	IV-	3	496
Alto Alto	IV	3	280
Big Cottonwood Creek Catch Pond	IV	3	456
Crystal Creek	IV	3	400
East Verde Wilderness Run	IV	3	42
Keystone Lifty and Ski Patroller Special	IV	3	342
Lake Fork River	IV	3	468
Little Cottonwood Heights	IV	3	456
Lower Ruby & Dark Canyon	IV	3	128
Sunlight	IV	3	154
Upper Greys River	IV	3	396
Upper Clear Creek	IV (IV+)	3	328
Lower Boulder Canyon	IV (IV+,P)	3	282
Upper NF Poudre	IV (V-)	3	102
Uinta River	IV (V,V+)	3	468
Blackfoot River	IV (Vs)	3	450
Guadalupe	IV (NR)	3	434
Byers Canyon	IV+	3	344
Clear Creek Mosier Gulch	IV+	3	92
Eagle Source	IV+	3	356
McCoy Creek	IV+	3	396
Muddy Creek NF Gunnison	IV+	3	196
Red River	IV+	3	424
Upper Chama Canyon	IV+	3	414
Expert		**★★★**	
Buckhorn Creek	V-	3	110
Sixth Water Creek	V-	3	458
Upper Boulder Canyon	V-	3	284
Slate River	V- (V)	3	132
Upper East	V- (NR)	3	136
Fryingpan's Lime Creek	V- (NR,Ps)	3	500
Big Cottonwood Creek Storm Mountain	V	3	456
Blackrock Creek	V	3	402
Cabin Creek	V	3	170
Cascade Creek Slot	V	3	238
Cottonwood	V	3	146
Deer Creek	V	3	170
East Verde Park & Huck	V	3	40
La Plata Falls	V	3	218
Little Cottonwood Canyon Hellgate	V	3	456

Mad Creek	V	3	592
Middle Fork Little Snake	V	3	596
Needle Creek	V	3	232
North Fork Fryingpan	V	3	498
Rico Falls	V	3	200
Upper Elkhead River	V	3	598
Upper Ruby Fork	V	3	128
Upper South Fork Buffalo	V	3	402
Upper Tenmile Creek	V	3	338
Vail Pass Black Gore	V	3	364
Paint Rock Creek	V+	3	98
Roaring Fork Grottos	V+	3	492
Rock Creek	V+	3	354
South Fork Rio Grande	V+	3	476
The White Stripe	V+	3	340
Upper East Fork San Juan	V+	3	478
Upper Roaring Fork	V+ (NRs)	3	490
Two Star Sections (★★)	**class**	**★**	
Freestyle		**★★**	
Breckenridge Park	Freestyle	2	340
Estes Park WWP	Freestyle	2	304
Farmington WWP	Freestyle	2	224
Beginner		**★★**	
Snake River Ranch to East Table	I	2	388
Cisco to Hittle Bottom	I	2	262
Bakers Bridge to 32nd Street Park	I+	2	220
Eureka to Howardsville	II	2	244
Gila Lower Box	II	2	26
Lake Fork Gate to Red Bridge	II	2	142
North Bridge to Gunnison Park	II	2	140
Lower Eagle	II (IIIx2)	2	370
Lower Greys River	II (III+)	2	396
Upper Rustic	II (IV)	2	112
Deckers	II+	2	308
GJ Town	II+	2	550
Idaho Springs to Kermits	II+	2	330
Lower Gunnison	II+	2	550
Milk Run	II+	2	74
NSV Apple Valley	II+	2	292
Intermediate		**★★**	
Lower SF Rio Grande	III-	2	474
South Denver Beginner Float	III-	2	320
Gunnison Park to McCabes Lane	III- (III+)	2	140
Lower NF Poudre	III	2	102
San Miguel Sawpit	III	2	202
Upper Eagle	III	2	370
Upper Tonto	III (IV)	2	36
Blue River Source	III (V)	2	340
Cebolla Creek	III (P)	2	144
Pinnacke Rock	III+	2	82
Upper Blue	III+	2	342
Upper Granite Creek	III+ (IVs)	2	398
Lower Bogan	III+ (NR)	2	178
Advanced		**★★**	
North Fork Gunnison	IV-	2	544
SF South Platte Below Cheesman	IV- (P)	2	310
Buzzard Creek	IV	2	560
Hermosa Creek	IV	2	238
North Fork Duchesne Source	IV	2	464
Afternoon Adventure Tenmile Creek	IV+	2	338
Grinell Creek	IV+	2	154
Left Hand Creek	IV+	2	294
Little SF Poudre	IV+	2	110
Uncompahgre Box	IV+	2	538
Upper Upper Gore Creek	IV+	2	366
Fish Ladders & Black Gore Gorge	IV+ (V,NR))	2	364
Expert		**★★**	
Alkali Creek	V	2	354
Hidden Falls	V	2	360
Miller Creek	V	2	218
Glade Park Potholes	V-	2	560
Grizzly Creek	V-	2	372
Turkey Creek	V-	2	318
Uncompahgre Southside	V-	2	538
Woods Creek	V- (V)	2	334
Wolf Creek	V-(NR)	2	478
Teton Creek	V (NRs,Ps)	2	410
Upper Yule	V (P)	2	196
Dream Canyon	V+	2	284
Kannah Creek	V+	2	560
King Solomon	V+	2	596
NF South Arkansas	V+	2	78
Toltec Gorge	V+ (NRs)	2	424
Paonia Dam	NR	2	544
One Star Sections (★)	**class**	**★**	
Two Rivers Park Down	III-	1	376
Lake City Town	II+	1	142
BV Lower Town	III	1	74
Sweetwater Creek	IV-	1	354
Little Tommy	IV+ (P)	1	304
Rio de los Trampas	V	1	434
Grape Creek	V (P)	1	78
Smith Fork	V (P)	1	544
Middle Boulder Canyon	V+	1	284
Middle Ruby Fork	V+	1	128
Silverplume	V+	1	334
Rocky Mountain National Park	NR	1	304
Upper Upper Boulder Canyon	NR	1	284

The most controversial index in the book. Let me start by saying that I've had plenty of five-star days on one-star runs. The Silverplume section has brightened my day more than once, and I still have the Smith Fork on my to-do list. By the same token, the worst day that I've ever had on the river is on one of the best five star runs in the book. Basically anything above three stars should be on your to-do list. Below that, its only really worth doing if it's a local run, is convenient, or is viewed as a hiking and exploring adventure. The rating is based on how good the section is for that type of run, and not based on the style of a section. Our personal bias weighs heavily.

Arizona



MAP ON PAGE	CHAPTER	PAGE START
612, 613	Arizona	22
630	Arkansas River	60
619	Bighorn Mountains	88
622, 619	Cache La Poudre	100
632, 615, 634	Central Mountains	126
618, 620	Clarks Fork Yellowstone	148
628, 615, 626, 632	Crystal River	172
614, 615, 634	Dolores Drainage	198
634, 614	Durango	210
614, 626	East Utah	248
624	Front Range	272
625, 624, 626, 630	Greater Denver	306
626, 615	Headwaters of the Colorado	336
616	I-80 Survival	378
620, 621, 618	Jackson Hole	382
633	New Mexico	412
619	North Platte	436
616, 614, 620	North Utah	448
635	Pagosa Zone	470
629	Roaring Fork	488
614	San Rafael Swell	502
613	Virgin River	514
615, 614, 632	Western Slope	524
621, 618	Wind River Range	562
617, 614, 619	Yampa	582

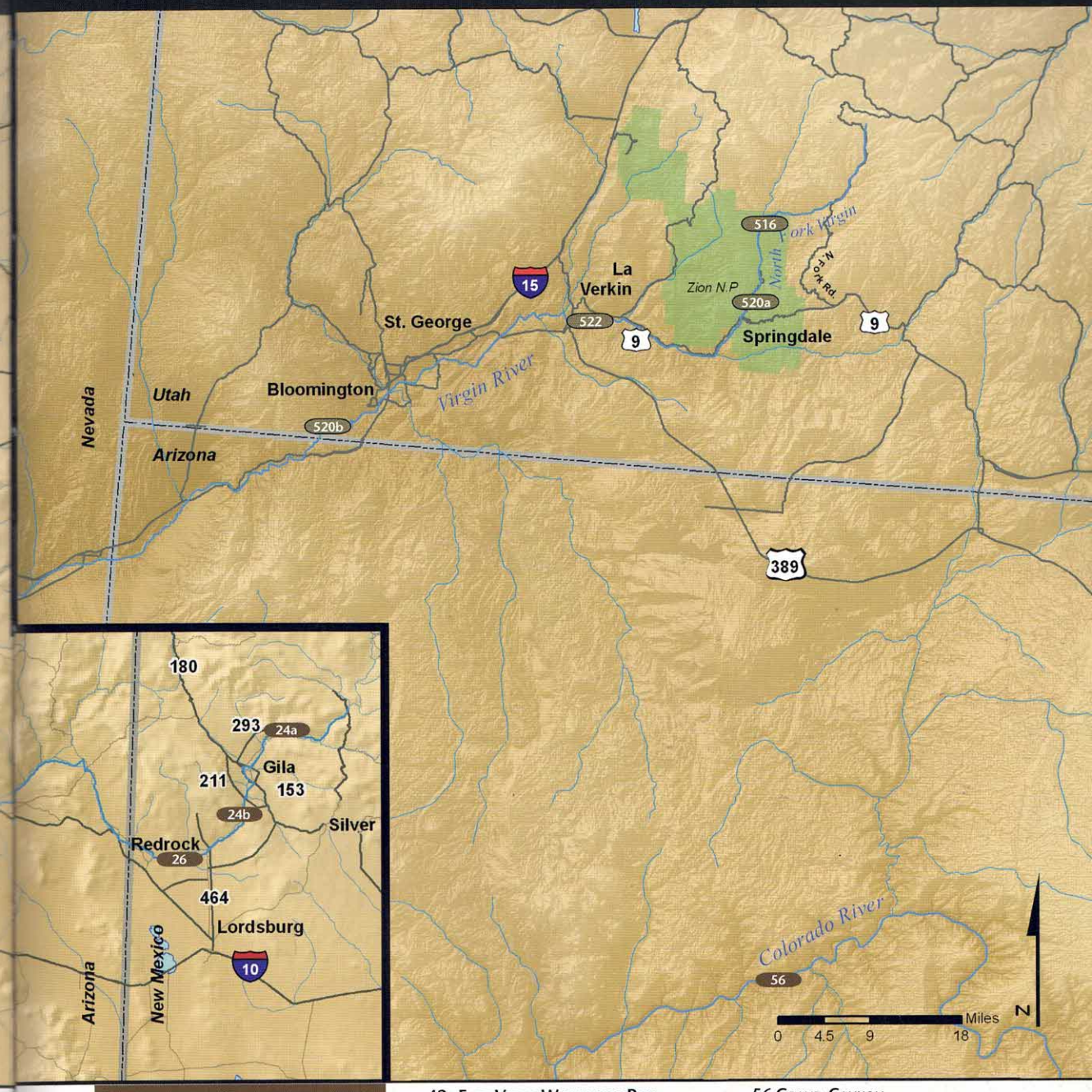
420b

Number: This is the page number of the labeled run.

Letter: This letter is used to differentiate runs that are on the same page. This is only used to show the correlation between different sections on a map, and is not used anywhere else in the book.

Color: The unique color for each chapter. This color will only be used to mark the associated chapter.

Virgin River, UT



22 Arizona

- 124a Gila Middle Box
- 24b Gila Wilderness Run
- 26 Gila Lower Box
- 28 Salt River
- 32 Christopher Creek
- 36 Upper Tonto
- 38a Tonto Hellsgate
- 38b Tonto Box Canyon
- 40a East Verde Park & Huck
- 40b East Verde Doll Baby
- 42a East Verde Wilderness Run
- 42b Fossil Creek
- 44a Verde Beasley Flats
- 44b Verde Wilderness
- 46 Aqua Fria
- 48a Oak Creek Indian Gardens
- 48b Oak Creek Slide Rock
- 50a Oak Creek Sedona to Red Rock
- 50b Oak Creek Dry Creek-Cornville
- 52a Santa Maria Upper Box
- 52b Santa Maria Lower Box
- 56 Grand Canyon

514 Virgin River

- 516 Zion Narrows
- 520a Temple of Sinawava
- 520b Virgin River Gorge
- 522 Timpoweap Canyon

Utah Overview & Dolores, CO

502 San Rafael Swell

- 504a Muddy Creek
- 504b Fremont
- 506 Black Boxes
- 508 Little Grand Canyon San Rafael
- 510 Straight Canyon
- 512a Left Fork Huntington
- 512b Huntington

448 North Utah

- 456 Little Cottonwood
- 458 Sixth Water Creek
- 460 Upper Provo River
- 464a North Fork Duchesne Source
- 464b Cataract Gorge NF Duchesne
- 466 Little Deer Creek
- 468a Uinta River
- 468b Lake Fork River

582 Yampa Drainage

- 600 Cross Mountain Gorge

248 East Utah

- 250 Yampa Canyon
- 252 Gates of Lodore
- 254a White River Floats
- 254b Upper South White
- 256a Desolation Canyon
- 256b Green River Daily

Western Slope, CO

524 Western Slope
526A Big Cimarron
526B Lower Cimarron
528 Black Canyon
536 Gunnison Gorge
538A Uncompahgre Qualtiy Quickie
538B Uncompahgre Southside
538C Uncompahgre Box
540 M-Wave
542A Fluffy Muffin
542B Ridgway Park
544A North Fork Gunnison
544B Smith Fork
544C Paonia Dam
546 Escalante Creek
550A Lower Gunnison
550B GJ Town
550C Loma Ruby Horsethief
552A 5th Street Wave
552B Silo Hole
554 Lucky 7
556 Big Sur
558 Plauteau Creek
560A Kannah Creek
560B Glade Park Potholes
560C Buzzard Creek
126 Central Mountains
128B Middle Ruby Fork
128C Lower Ruby & Dark Canyon
142A Lake Fork Canyon
142B Lake Fork Gate to Red Bridge
142C Lake Fork Box
142D Lake City Town
144A Henson Creek
144B Cebolla Creek
146A Cinnamon Gorge
172 Crystal River
174A Avalanche Down
174B Catherine Store Roaring Fork
176A Narrows
176B Meatgrinder
178 Bogan Canyon
196 Muddy Creek NF Gunnison
336 Headwaters of the Colorado
372A Barrel Springs
372B Glenwood Canyon Shoshone
376A Roaring Fork Cemetery
376B South Canyon

256C Price River
258 Westwater Canyon
262A Cisco to Hittle Bottom
262B Moab Daily
262C Labyrinth
264 Cataract Canyon
268 Escalante River
270 Lower San Juan
198 Dolores River
200A Rico Falls
200B Stoner Stampede
200C Upper Dolores Bonus Action
202A San Miguel Keystone Canyon
202B San Miguel Sawpit
202C Norwood Canyon
202D Ledges
204A Dolores Canyon
204B Slickrock Canyon
208 Gateway
210 Durango
228 Upper Animas
222 Smelter Park

North Utah, Green River, WY

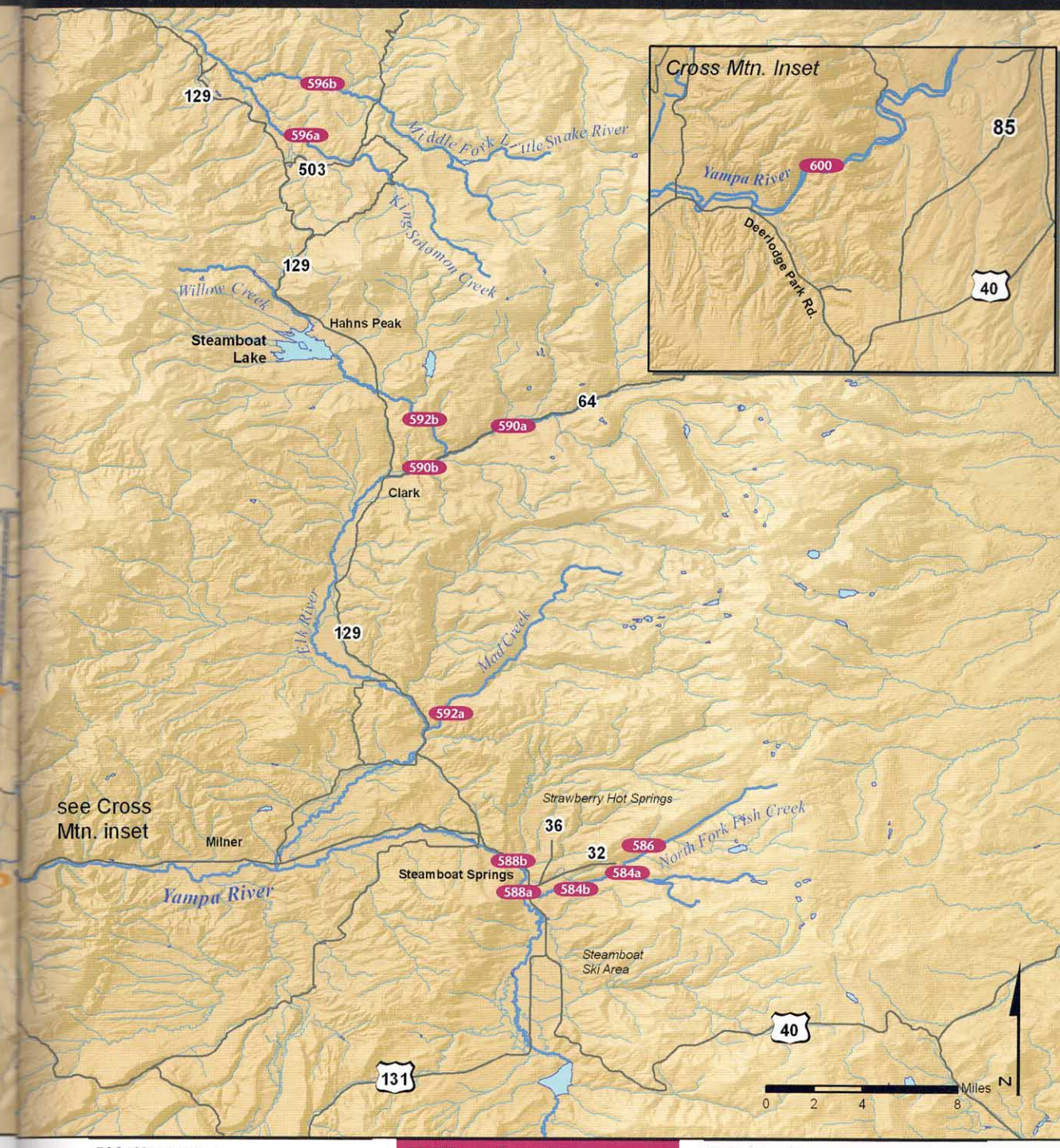
448 North Utah

450A Blackfoot River
450B Black Canyon Bear River
452A Logan Ricks Springs
452B Logan Staircase
452C Logan Third to Second Dam
452D Lower Logan
454A Ogden River
454B Ogden Park
454C Riverdale Wave
456A Big Cottonwood Storm Mtn
456B Big Cottonwood Catch Pond
456C Little Cottonwood Hellgate
456D Little Cottonwood Heights
458 Sixth Water Creek
460 Upper Provo Falls
462A Upper Provo Slate Gorge
462B Lower Slate Gorge
464A North Fork Duchesne Source
464B Cataract Gorge NF Duchesne
466A Little Deer Creek
466B East Fork NF Duchesne
468A Uinta River
468B Lake Fork River

502 San Rafael Swell

510 Straight Canyon
512A Left Fork Huntington

Yampa Drainage, CO

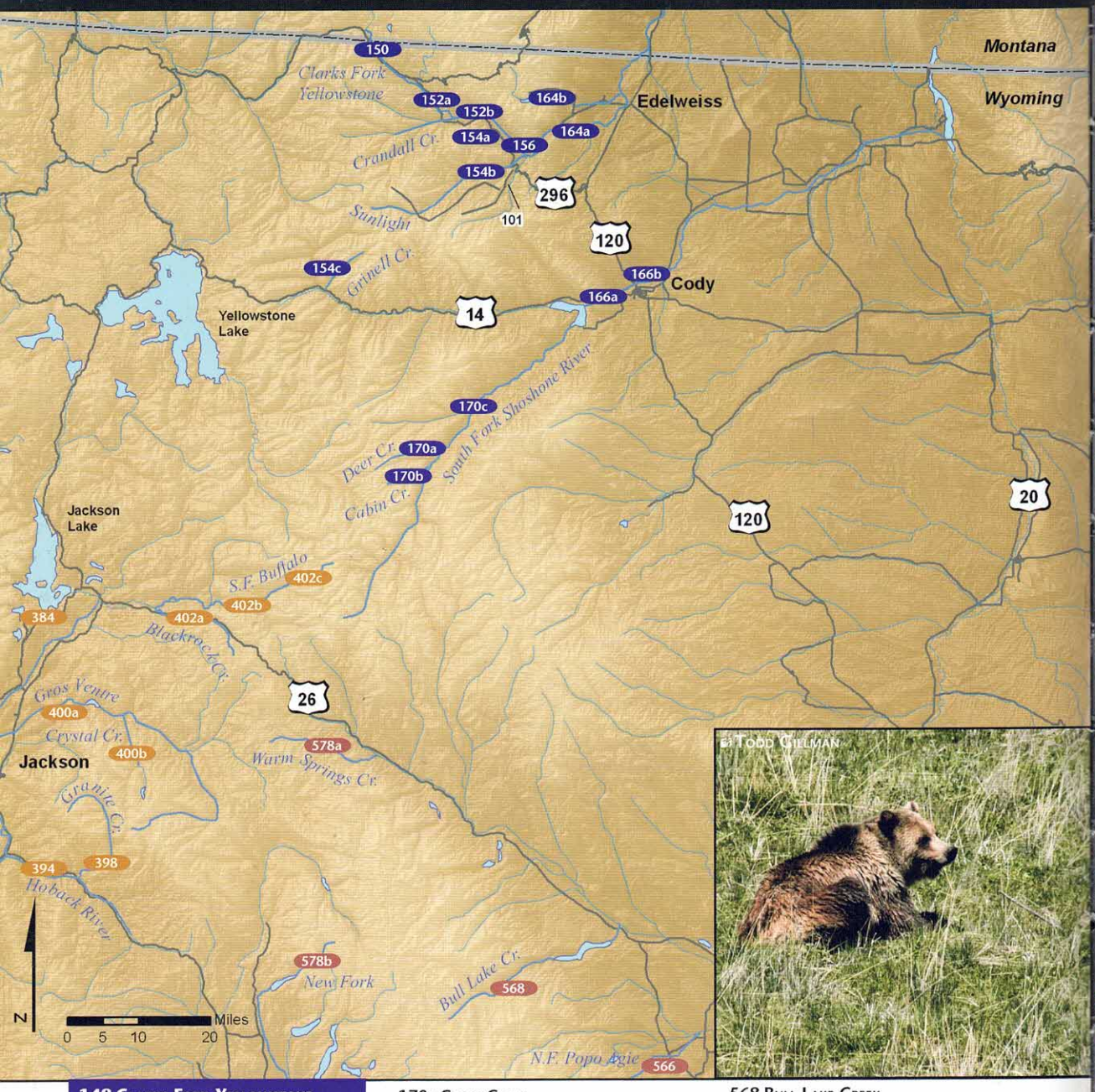


512B Huntington
248 East Utah
252 Gates of Lodore
254A White River Floats
256A Desolation Canyon
256C Price River
378 I-80 WY
380 Green River Park

582 Yampa Drainage
584A Upper Fish Creek
584B Lower Fish Creek
586 North Fork Fish Creek
588A Steamboat Town
588B Steamboat WWP
590A Upper Elk River
590B Lower Elk River

592A Mad Creek
592B Willow Creek
594 Slater Creek
596A King Solomon
596B Middle Fork Little Snake
598 Upper Elkhead River
600 Cross Mountain Gorge

Clarks Fork Yellowstone, WY



148 Clarks Fork Yellowstone
150 Stix and Stones
152A Day Stretch
152B Honeymoon
154A Crandall Creek
154B Sunlight Creek
154C Grinell Creek
156 The Box
164A Lower Clarks Fork
164B Little Rock Creek
166A Shoshone River
166B Lower Shoshone
170A Deer Creek
170B Cabin Creek
170C Main SF Shoshone

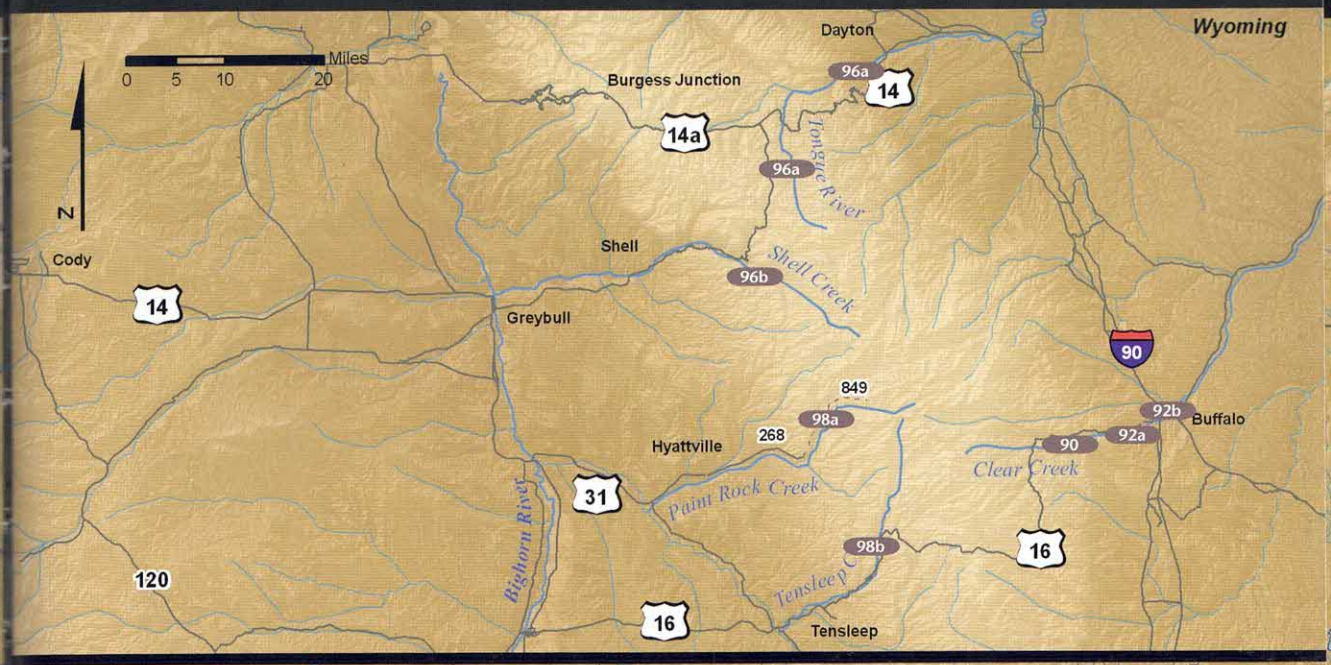
382 Jackson Hole
384 Snake River Yellowstone
394 Hoback River
398 Granite Creek
400A Gros Ventre
400B Crystal Creek
402A Blackrock Creek
402B South Fork Buffalo
402C Upper South Fork Buffalo

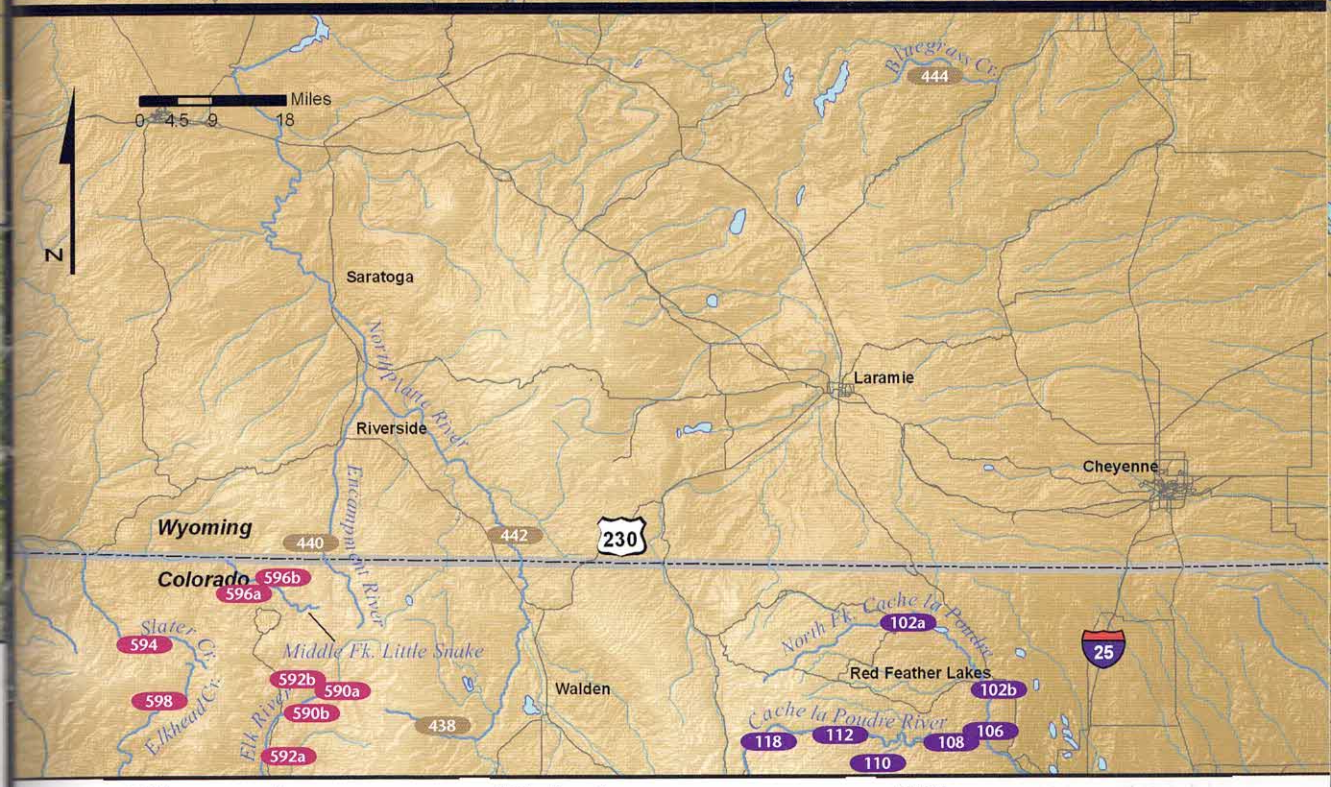
562 Wind River Range
566 North Fork Popo Agie
568 Bull Lake Creek
578A Warm Springs Creek
578B New Fork

88 Bighorn Mountains
90 Clear Creek Canyon
92A Clear Creek Mosier Gulch
92B Clear Creek Town
96A Tongue River
96B Shell Creek
98A Paint Rock Creek
98B Tensleep

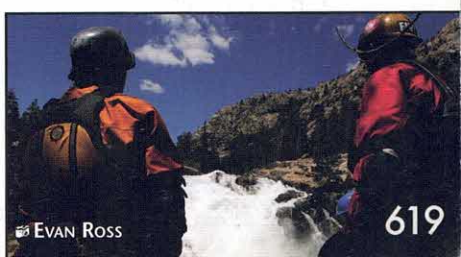
436 North Platte
438 Roaring Fork

Bighorns & North Platte, WY



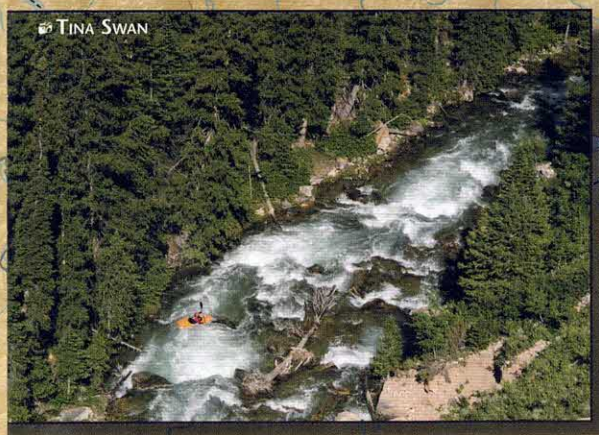


440 Encampment River
442 Northgate Canyon
444 Bluegrass creek
582 Yampa Drainage
590A Upper Elk River
590B Lower Elk River
592A Mad Creek
592B Willow Creek
594 Slater Creek
596A King Solomon
596B Middle Fork Little Snake
598 Upper Elkhead River
100 Cache La Poudre
102A Upper NF Poudre
102B Lower NF Poudre
106 Stevens Down
108 Narrows
110 Little SF Poudre
112 Rustic
118 Spencer Heights



Evan Ross

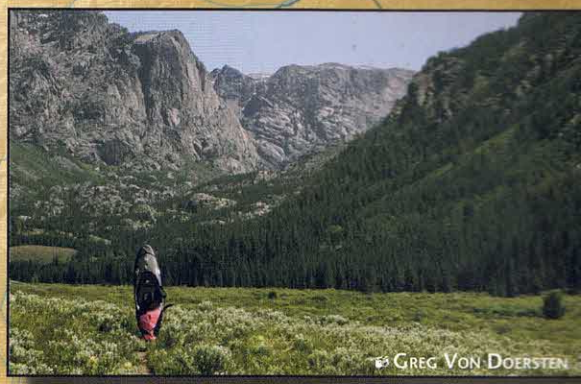
Idaho & Jackson Hole, WY

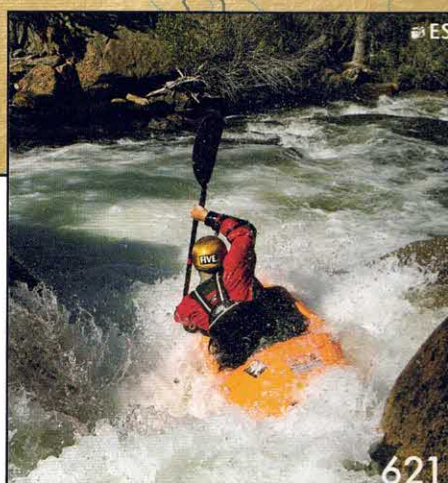


382 Jackson Hole

384a Snake River Yellowstone
384b Snake River Grand Teton NP
386a Snake River Moose Visitor
386b Snake River Wilson Bridge
386c Snake River South Park Bridge
388a Snake River Ranch to East Table
388b Alpine Canyon
390a Kings Wave
390b Station Creek
390c Burrito & Taco
392a Big Kahuna & Lunch Counter
392b Big Friendly Giant
394 Hoback River
396a Upper Greys River
396b Greys River
396c McCoy Creek
398a Granite Creek
398b Upper Granite Creek
400a Gros Ventre
400b Crystal Creek
402a Blackrock Creek
402b South Fork Buffalo
402c Upper South Fork Buffalo
406 Teton River
408a Bitch Creek
408b Falls River

Wind River Range, WY





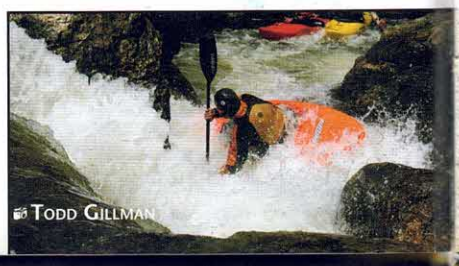
Jackson Lake
Moran Jct.
FR.30050
South Buffalo Fork
Blackrock Cr.
Deer Cr.
Cabin Cr.
South Fork Shoshone River
Spoke River
FR.30400
Warm Spring Cr.
Wind River
Jackson
Dubois
Granite Cr.
Union Pass Rd.
FR.30505
FR.30500
Hoback River
FR.10138
FR.107
New Fork Lakes
Bronx
New Fork River
Pinedale
Bull Lake
Ocean Lake
Bull Lake Creek
348 Rd.
351 Rd.
Fort Washakie
294 Rd.
Dickinson Park
North Popo Agie River
Lander
Middle Popo Agie River
170a
170b
384a
402b
402c
402a
384b
89
386a
578a
386b
398b
390a
394
398a
386c
578b
568
287
26
189
191
13
564b
564a
566
N
0 5 10 20 Miles

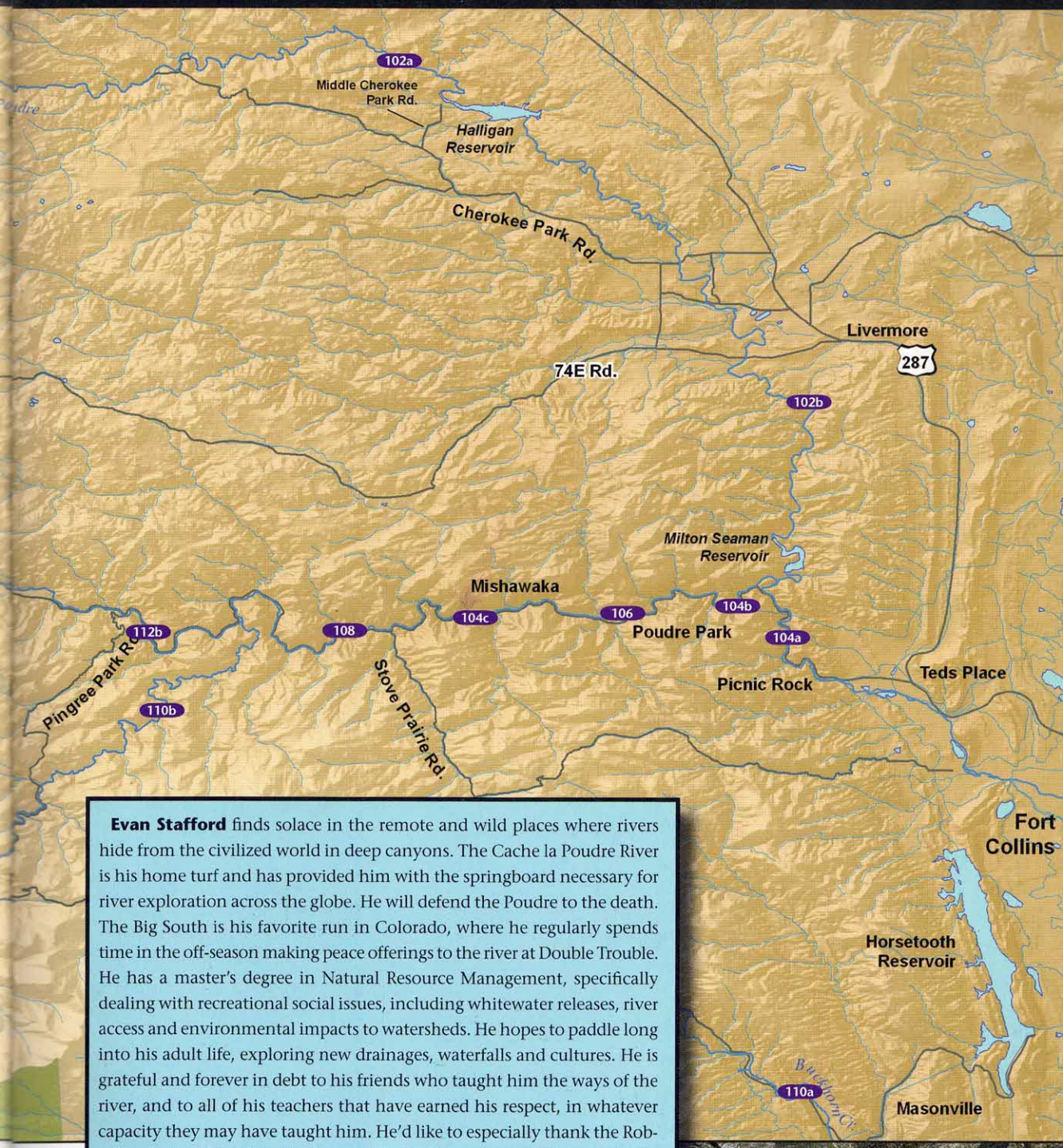
410A Henrys Fork
410B Lower Mesa Falls
410C Teton Creek
448 North Utah
450A Blackfoot River
450B Black Canyon Bear River
562 Wind River Range
564A Popo Agie Falls Run
564B Popo Agie Sinks Run
566 North Fork Popo Agie
568 Bull Lake Creek
578A Warm Springs Creek
578B New Fork
580 Wind River Bonus
148 Clarks Fork Yellowstone
170A Deer Creek
170B Cabin Creek

Cache La Poudre, CO

100 Cache La Poudre

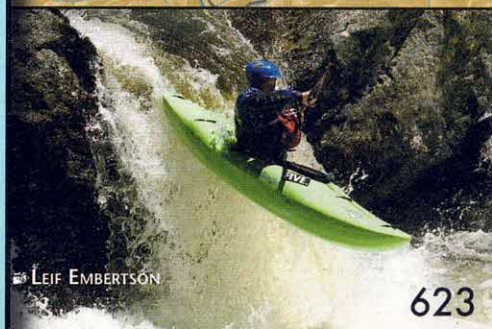
102A Upper NF Poudre
102B Lower NF Poudre
104A Filter Plant
104B Bridges Take-Out Wave
104C Ultimate Squirt Spot
106A Bridges
106B Lower Mishawaka
106C Poudre Park
106D Upper Mishawaka
108A Lower Narrows
108B Middle Narrows
108C Upper Narrows
110A Buckhorn Creek
110B Little SF Poudre
112A Upper Rustic
112B Lower Rustic
118 Spencer Heights
120 Joe Wright
122 Big South


Todd Gillman



Evan Stafford finds solace in the remote and wild places where rivers hide from the civilized world in deep canyons. The Cache la Poudre River is his home turf and has provided him with the springboard necessary for river exploration across the globe. He will defend the Poudre to the death. The Big South is his favorite run in Colorado, where he regularly spends time in the off-season making peace offerings to the river at Double Trouble. He has a master's degree in Natural Resource Management, specifically dealing with recreational social issues, including whitewater releases, river access and environmental impacts to watersheds. He hopes to paddle long into his adult life, exploring new drainages, waterfalls and cultures. He is grateful and forever in debt to his friends who taught him the ways of the river, and to all of his teachers that have earned his respect, in whatever capacity they may have taught him. He'd like to especially thank the Rob-father for teaching him the forward stroke. Never is everything perfect in paradise, but being a paddler is a great way to experience life. How could it not be, when we can drop over a majestic waterfall, on an even more majestic river, in the middle of the wilderness, where life is still as free as it really could be.

To my family, thank you for always being there for me and raising me right. To Nicole, my jade eyes, thanks for staying my wife through this trying project. I love you all.



Leif Embertson

Front Range, CO

272 Front Range

274 Eldorado Canyon
276 Lower South Boulder
278 Upper South Boulder
280 Alto Alto
282a Boulder Park & Town
282b Lower Boulder Canyon
284a Dream Canyon
284b Middle Boulder Canyon
284c Upper Boulder Canyon
284d Upper Upper Boulder Canyon
286 The Source
288 Jasper Creek
290 South Saint Vrain
292a Lyons Town & Park
292b NSV Apple Valley
294a NSV Shelbys Cottages
294b NSV Proving Grounds
294c Left Hand Creek
296 North Saint Vrain
300a Big Thompson
300b Lower Big Thompson
304a Rocky Mountain National Park
304b Estes Park WWP
304c Little Tommy

Greater Denver, CO

306 Greater Denver

308A Deckers

308B Foxton

310A Waterton

310B SF South Platte blw Cheesman

314 Bailey Canyon

316A Cheeseman Canyon

316B Eleven-Mile Canyon

318A Bear Creek

318B Turkey Creek

320A Union WWP

320B Santa Fe & Mississippi Play

320C South Denver Beginner Float

322A Confluence Park

322B Golden Park

326 Lower Clear Creek

328A Upper Clear Creek

328B Black Rock

330A Lawson Hole

330B Dumont

330C Idaho Springs to Kermits

332 West Fork Clear Creek

334A Silverplume

334B Woods Creek

Headwaters Overview, CO

336 Headwaters of the Colorado

338A Upper Tenmile Creek

338B Middle Down Tenmile Creek

338C Afternoon Adventure Tenmile

340A Blue River Source

340B Breckenridge Park

340C The White Stripe

342A Keystone Lifty Special

342B Upper Blue

344A Green Mountain Canyon

344B Byers Canyon

344C Fraser Canyon

346 Gore Canyon

350A Pumphouse

350B State Bridge to Burns

352A Burns to Sweetwater

352B Dotsero

354A Rock Creek

354B Sweetwater Creek

354C Piney River

354D Alkali Creek

356A Homestake Creek

356B Eagle Source

358 Gilman Gorge

360A Cross Creek

360B Hidden Falls

364A Vail Pass Black Gore

364B Black Gore Fish Ladders/Gorge

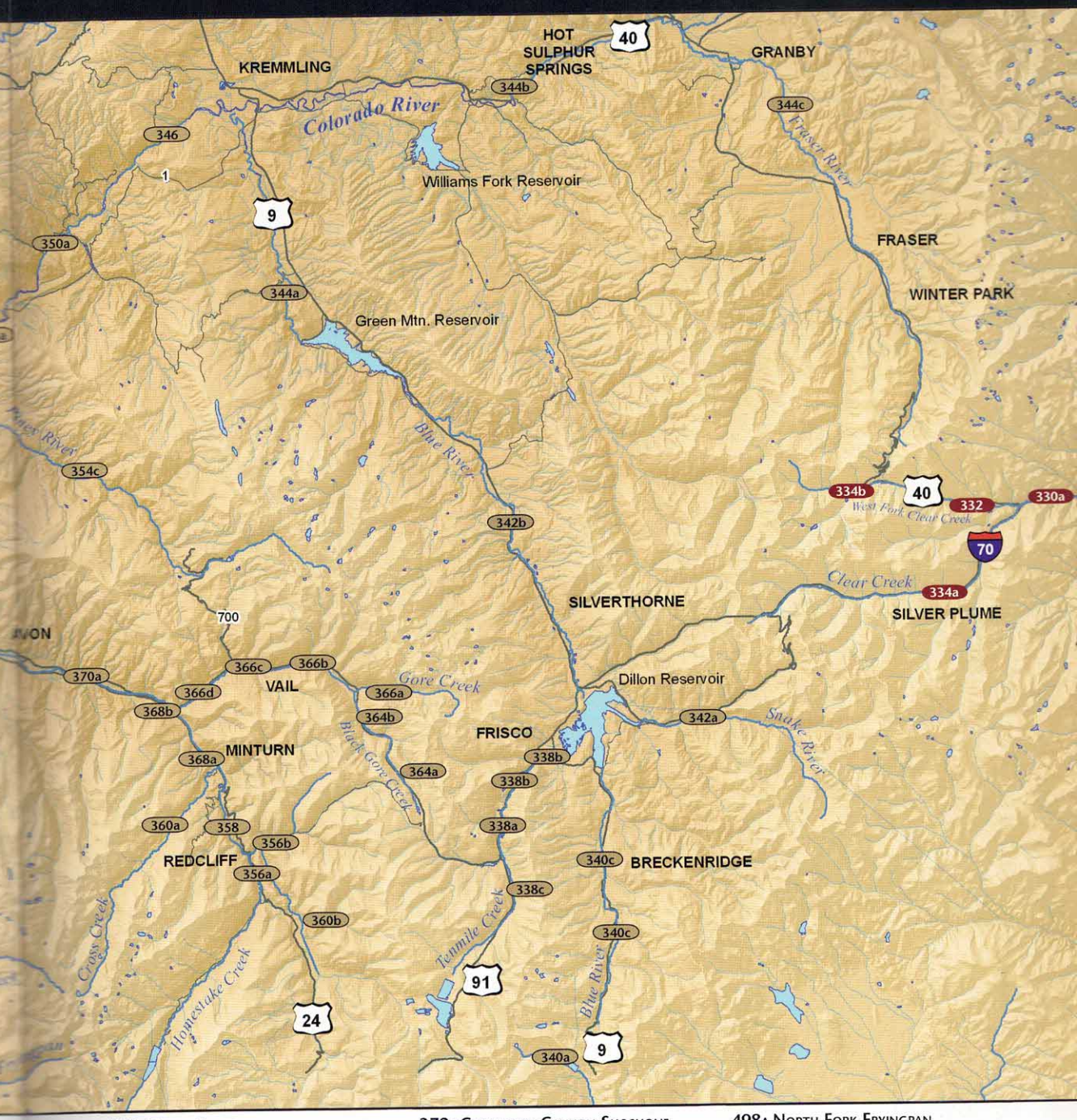
366A Upper Upper Gore Creek

366B Upper Gore Creek

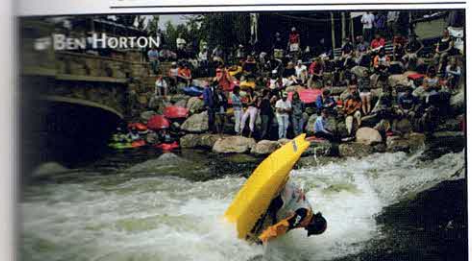
366C Vail Park

366D Lower Gore Creek

368A Minturn Slalom Course



368B Dowd Chute
370A Upper Eagle
370B Lower Eagle
372A Barrel Springs
372B Glenwood Canyon Shoshone
372C Glenwood Canyon Grizzly
372D Grizzly Creek
376A Roaring Fork Cemetery
376B South Canyon
376C Two Rivers Park Down
172 Crystal River
174A Avalanche Down
174B Catherine Store Roaring Fork
488 Roaring Fork
496C Toothache
498A North Fork Fryingpan
498B Upper Fryingpan
498C Lower Fryingpan
500 Fryingpan's Lime Creek
306 Greater Denver
330A Lawson Hole
332 West Fork Clear Creek
334A Silverplume
334B Woods Creek
248 East Utah
254B Upper South White



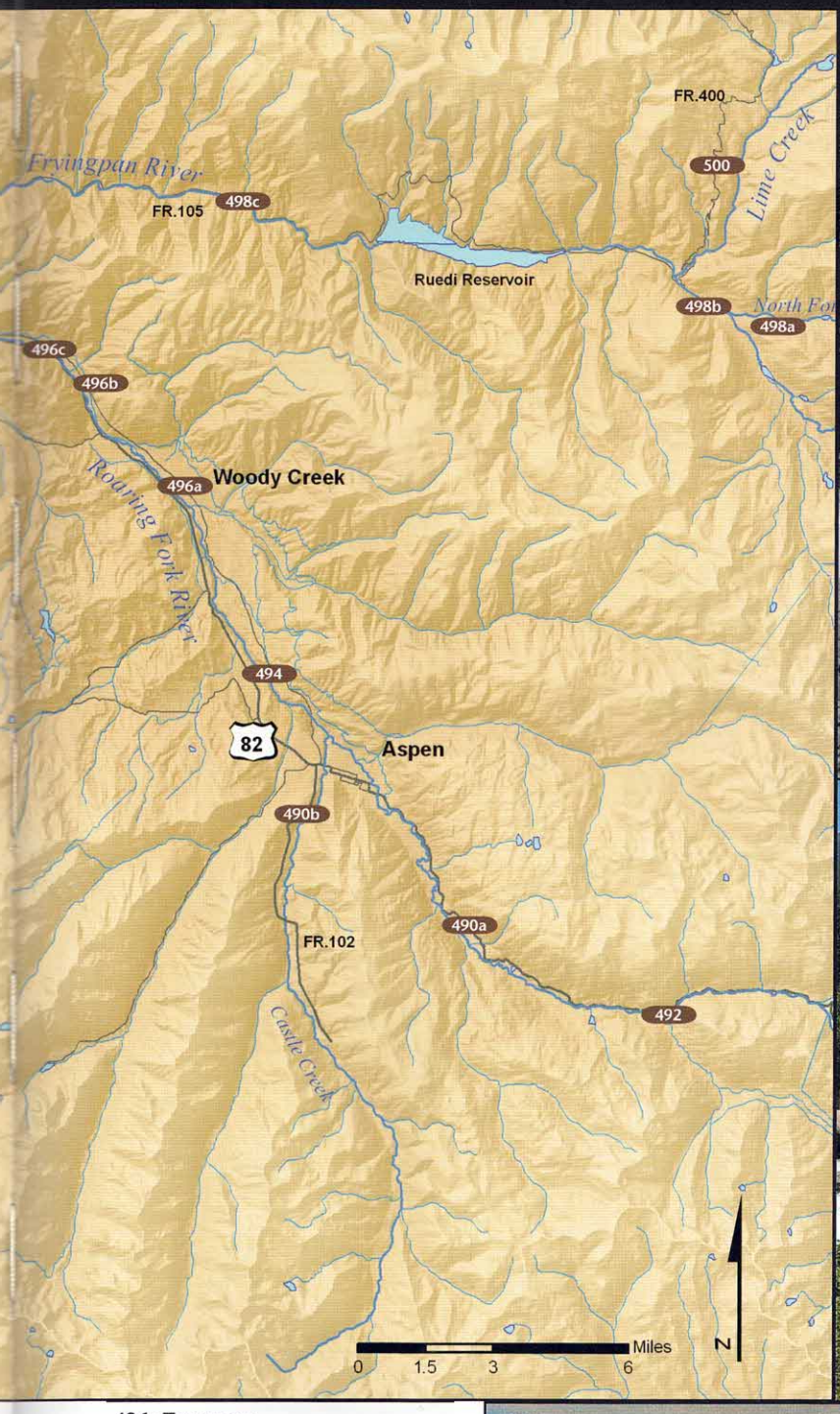
Crystal & Roaring Fork, CO

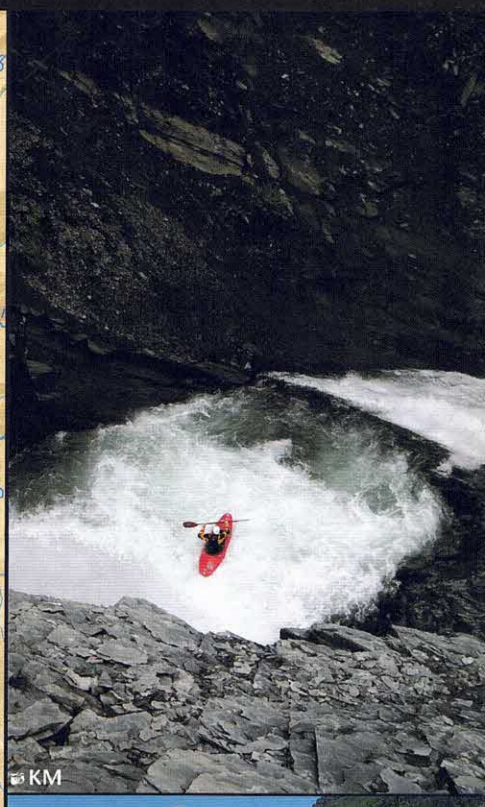
172 Crystal River

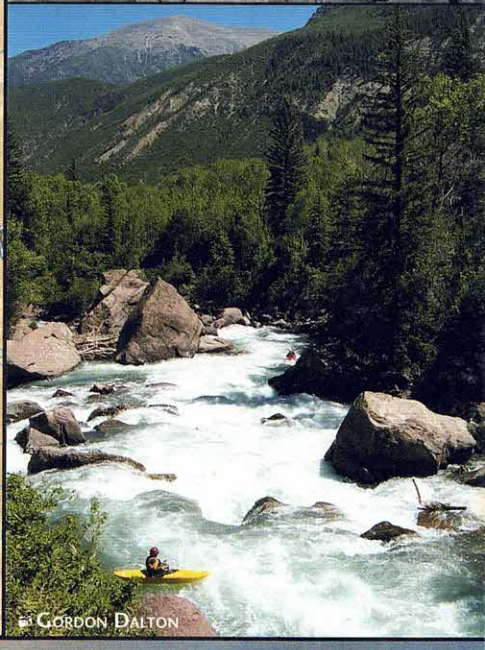
- 174A Avalanche Down
- 174B Catherine Store Roaring Fork
- 176A Narrows
- 176B Meatgrinder
- 178A Bogan Canyon
- 178B Lower Bogan
- 180 Yule Creek
- 184 Crystal Gorge
- 190A Crystal Mill Falls
- 190B South Fork Crystal
- 192 North Fork Crystal
- 196A Upper Yule
- 196B Muddy Creek NF Gunnison

488 Roaring Fork

- 490A Upper Roaring Fork
- 490B Castle Creek
- 492 Roaring Fork Grottos
- 494 Slaughterhouse
- 496A Upper Woody Creek
- 496B Lower Woody Creek



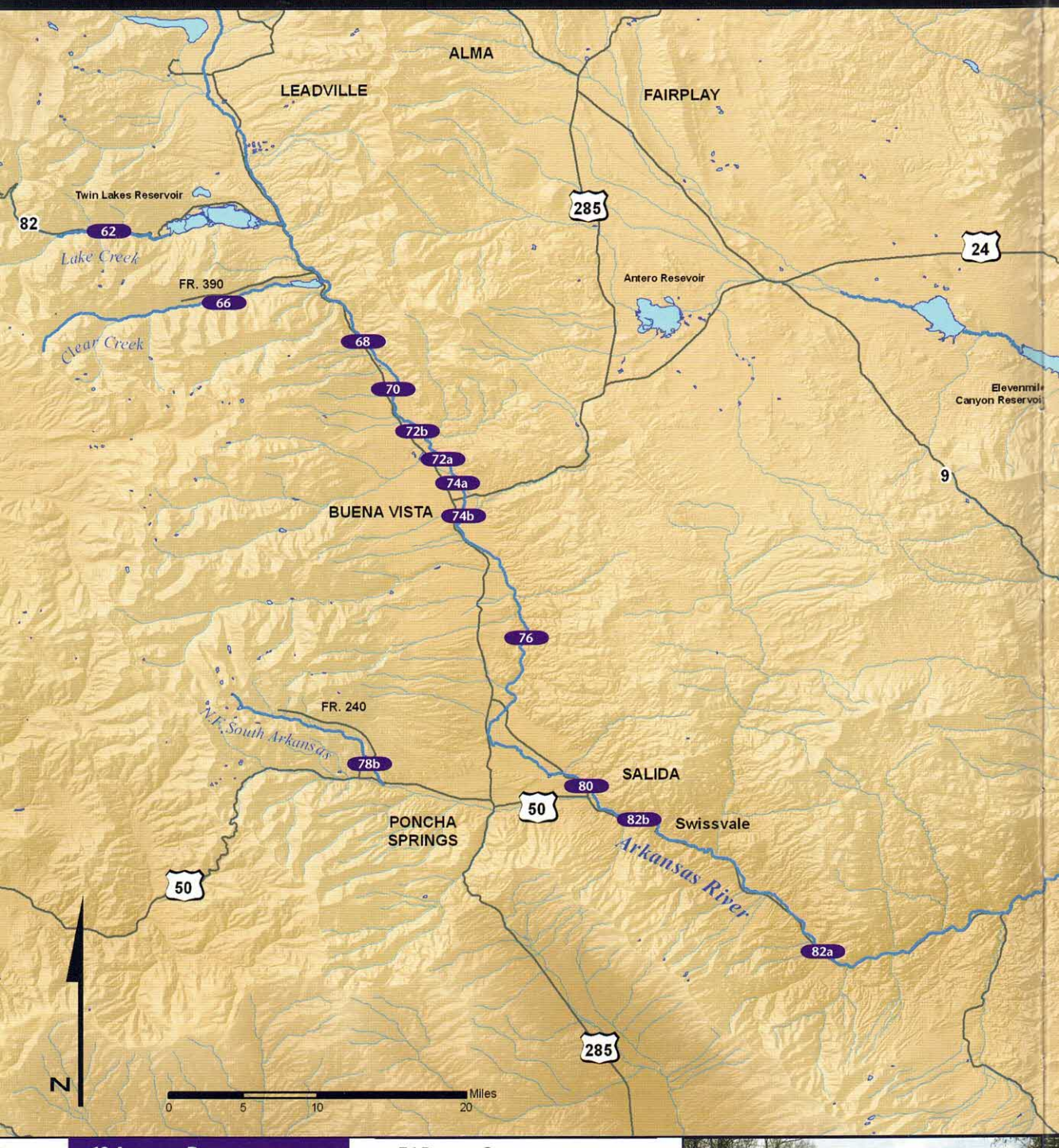

KM


Gordon Dalton

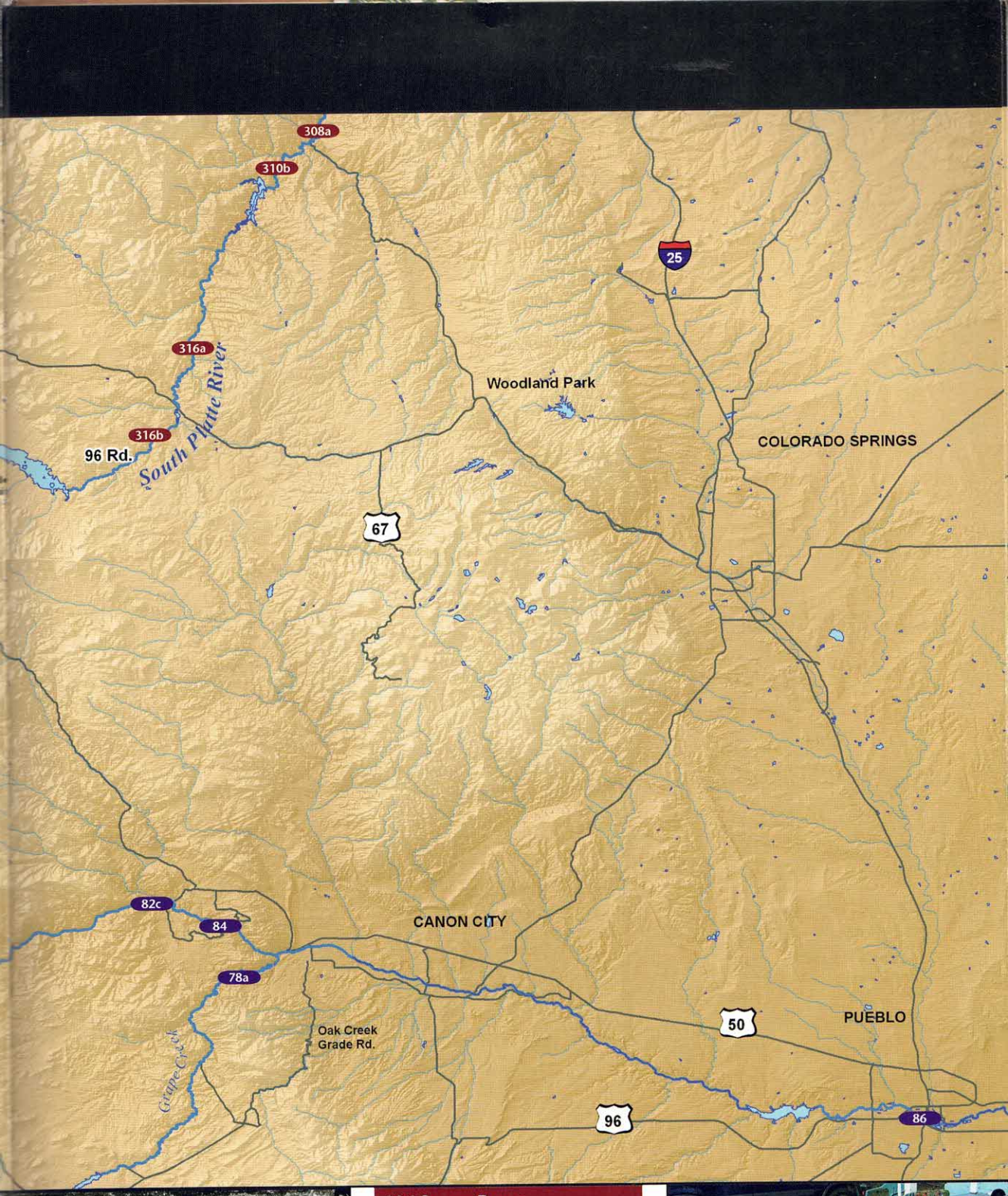
496c Toothache
498a North Fork Fryingpan
498b Upper Fryingpan
498c Lower Fryingpan
500 Fryingpan's Lime Creek
126 Central Mountains
136 Upper East

ES

Arkansas River, CO



60 Arkansas Drainage
62 Lake Creek
66 Clear Creek Ark
68 Pine Creek
70 Numbers
72A BV Park
72B Fractions
74A BV Lower Town
74B Milk Run
76 Browns Canyon
78A Grape Creek
78B NF South Arkansas
80 Salida Park
82A Salida to Pinnacle Rock
82B Rincon Squirt
82C Pinnacle Rock
84 Royal Gorge
86 Pueblo Park



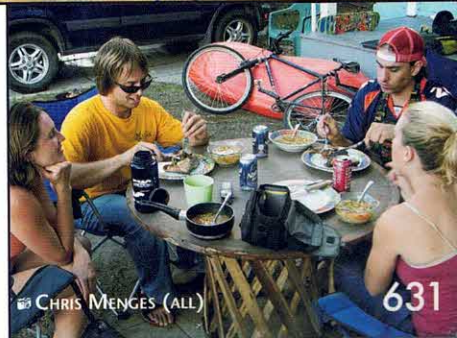
306 Greater Denver

308A Deckers

310B SF South Platte blw Cheesman

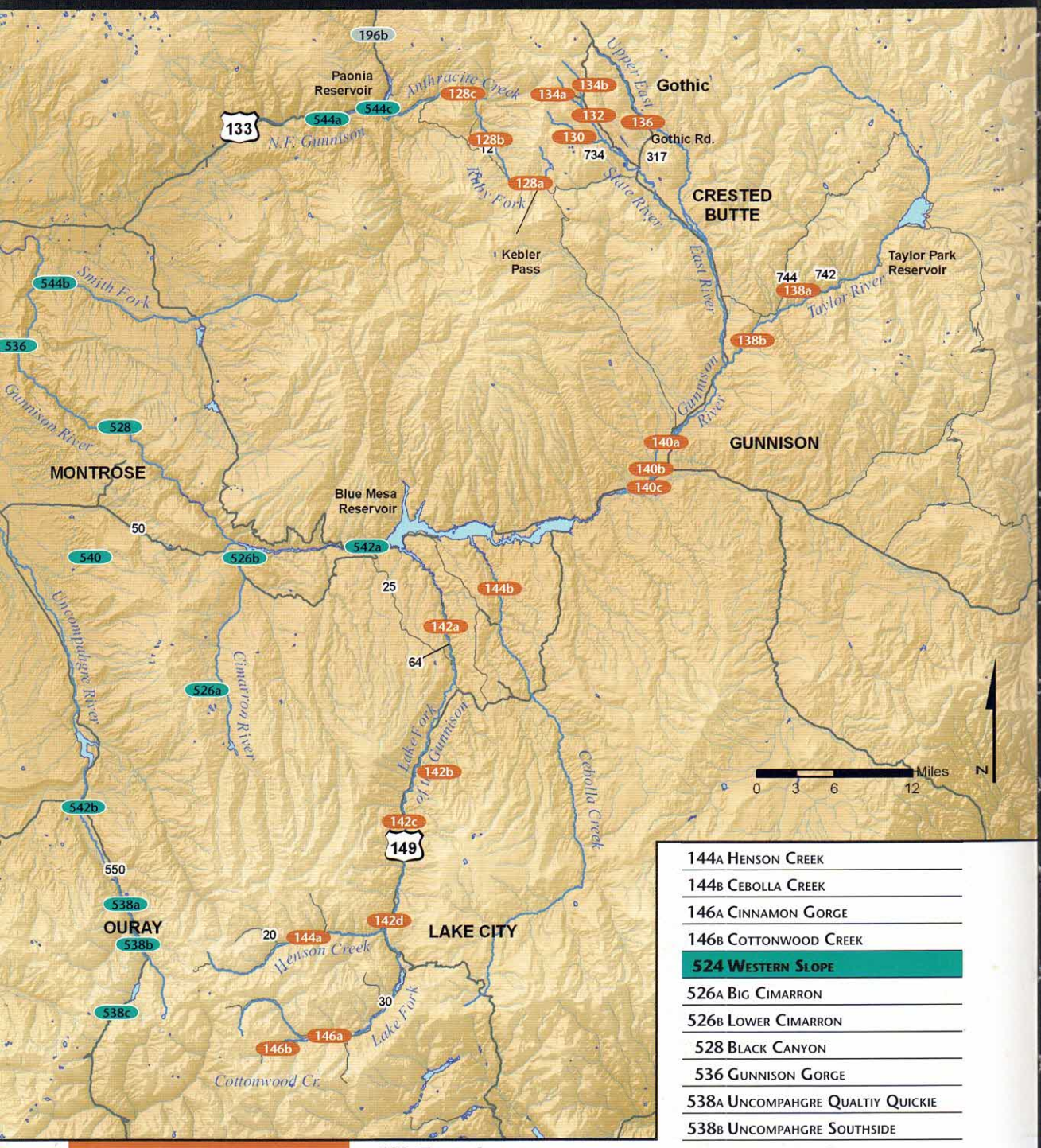
316A Cheeseman Canyon

316B Eleven-Mile Canyon



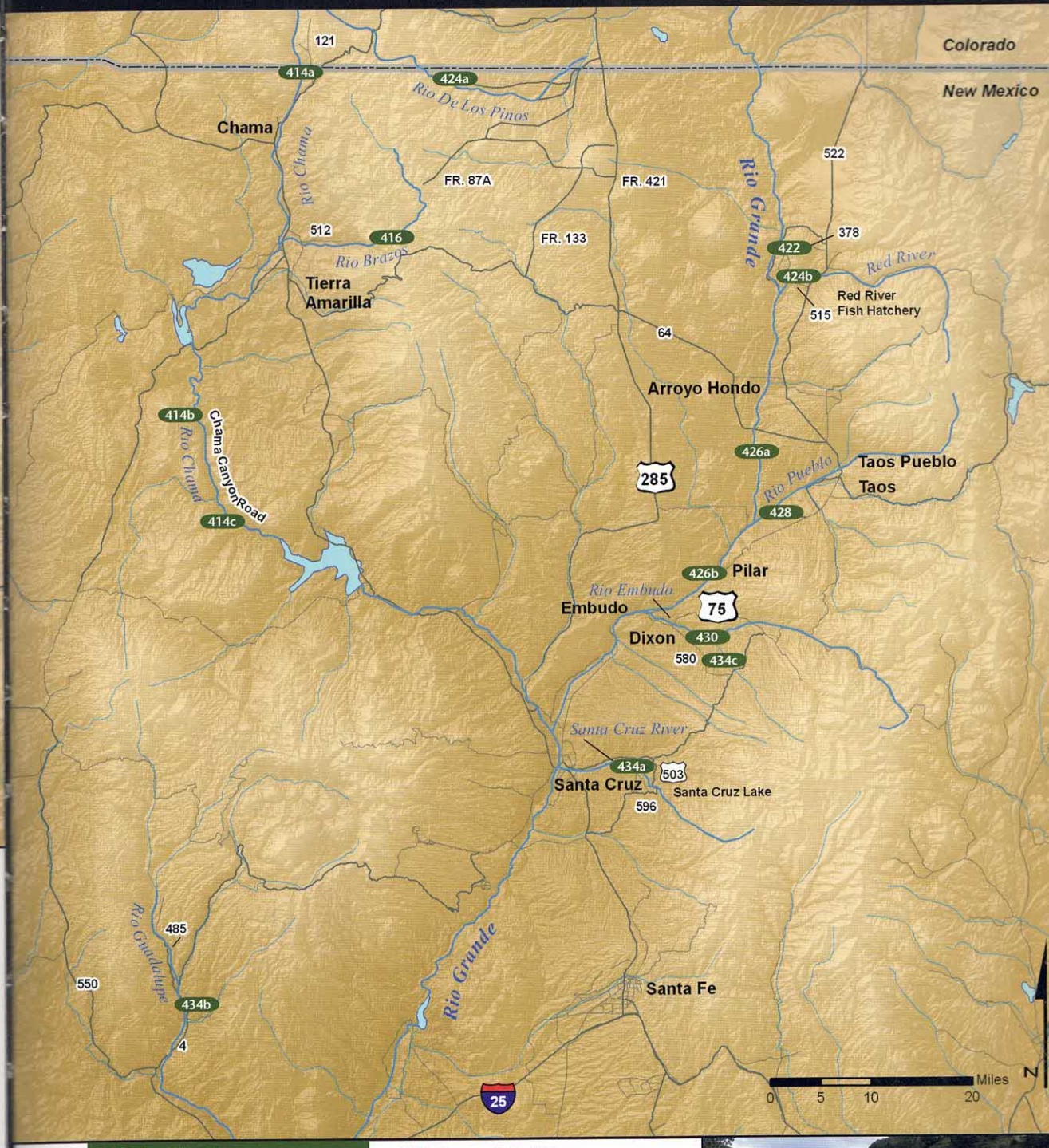
Chris Menges (all)

Central Mountains, CO



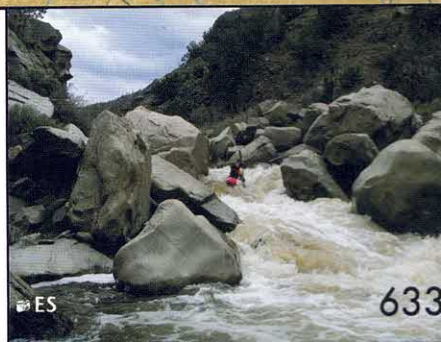
126 Central Mountains
128A Upper Ruby Fork
128B Middle Ruby Fork
128C Lower Ruby & Dark Canyon
130 Oh Be Joyful
132 Slate River
134A Daisy Creek
134B NF Slate
136 Upper East
138A Taylor Canyon
138B Lower Taylor
140A North Bridge to Gunnison Park
140B Gunnison Park
140C Gunnison Park to McCabes Lane
142A Lake Fork Canyon
142B Lake Fork Gate to Red Bridge
142C Lake Fork Box
142D Lake City Town
144A Henson Creek
144B Cebolla Creek
146A Cinnamon Gorge
146B Cottonwood Creek
524 Western Slope
526A Big Cimarron
526B Lower Cimarron
528 Black Canyon
536 Gunnison Gorge
538A Uncompahgre Qualtiy Quickie
538B Uncompahgre Southside
538C Uncompahgre Box
540 M-Wave
542A Fluffy Muffin
542B Ridgway Park
544A North Fork Gunnison
544B Smith Fork
544C Paonia Dam
172 Crystal River
196B Muddy Creek NF Gunnison

New Mexico



412 New Mexico

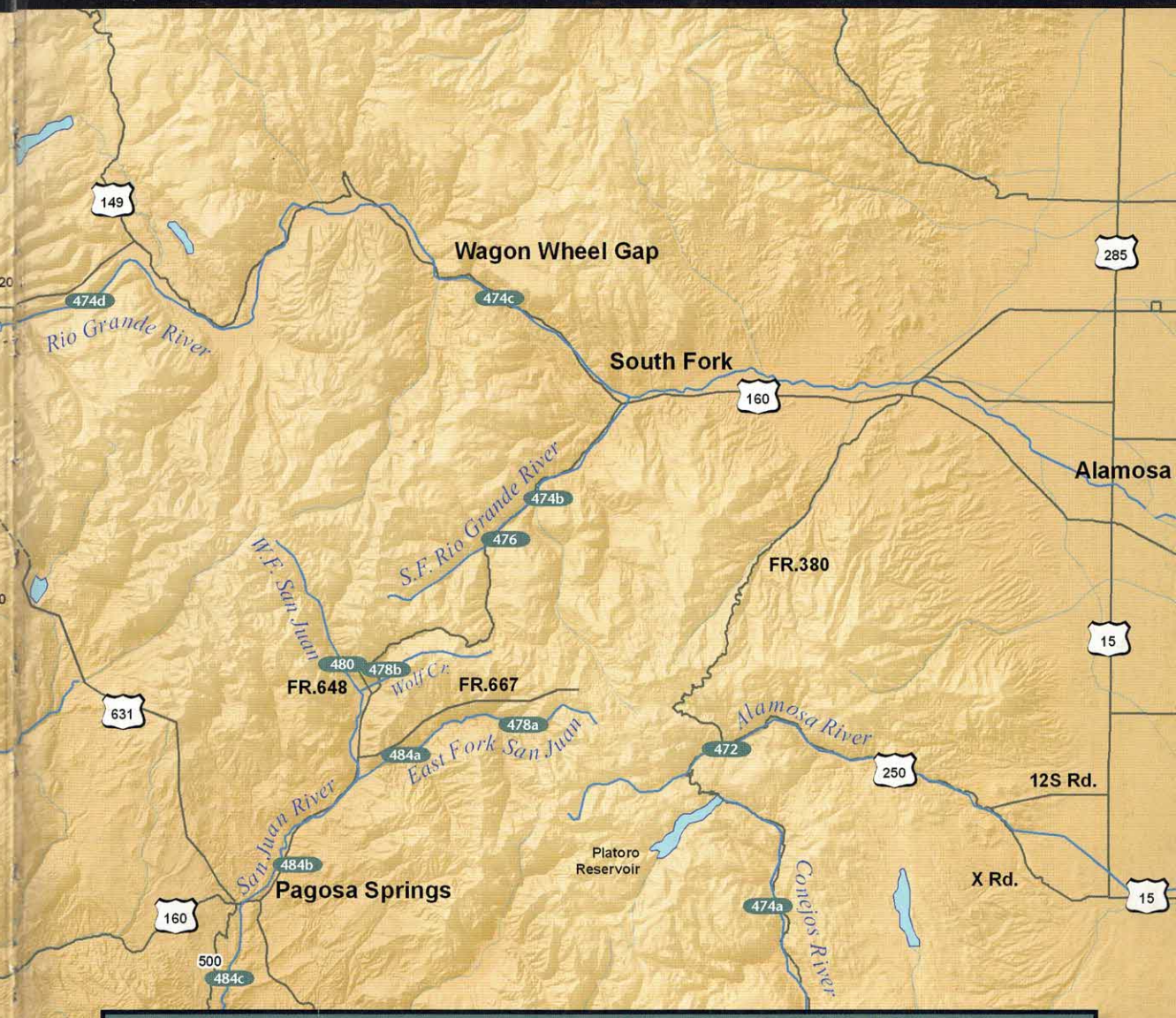
414A Upper Chama Canyon
414B Chama Wilderness
414C Chama Day Stretch
416 Rio Brazos
422 Upper Taos Box
424A Toltec Gorge
424B Red River
426A Lower Taos Box
426B Pilar
428 Rio Pueblo
430 Rio Embudo
434A Santa Cruz
434B Guadalupe
434C Rio de los Trampas



Durango, CO

210 Durango
212 Los Pinos
214 Vallecito Creek
218a Falls Creek
218b Miller Creek
218c La Plata Falls
220a Bakers Bridge to 32nd Street
220b 32nd Street to Smelter
222a Smelter Park
222b Santa Rita & Big Kahuna
224 Farmington WWP
226 Pandora's Box
228a Upper Animas
228b Rockwood Box
230 Tacoma Gauge
232a Needle Creek
232b Canyon Creek
236 Cascade Creek
238a Cascade Creek Slot
238b Hermosa Creek
240 2nd Gorge Lime
242 1st Gorge Lime
244a Silverton Daily
244b Eureka to Howardsville
244c Cement Creek
244d Lower South Mineral
246 South Mineral Creek
470 Pagosa Zone
472 Treasure Canyon
474a Conejos Pinnacle Gorge
474b Lower SF Rio Grande
474c Wagon Wheel Gap
474d Upper Rio Grande
476 South Fork Rio Grande
478a Upper East Fork San Juan
478b Wolf Creek
480 West Fork San Juan
484a East Fork San Juan
484b Pagosa Springs WWP & Town
484c Mesa Canyon
486 Piedra River
126 Central Mountains
146a Cinnamon Gorge
146b Cottonwood Creek

Pagosa Zone, CO



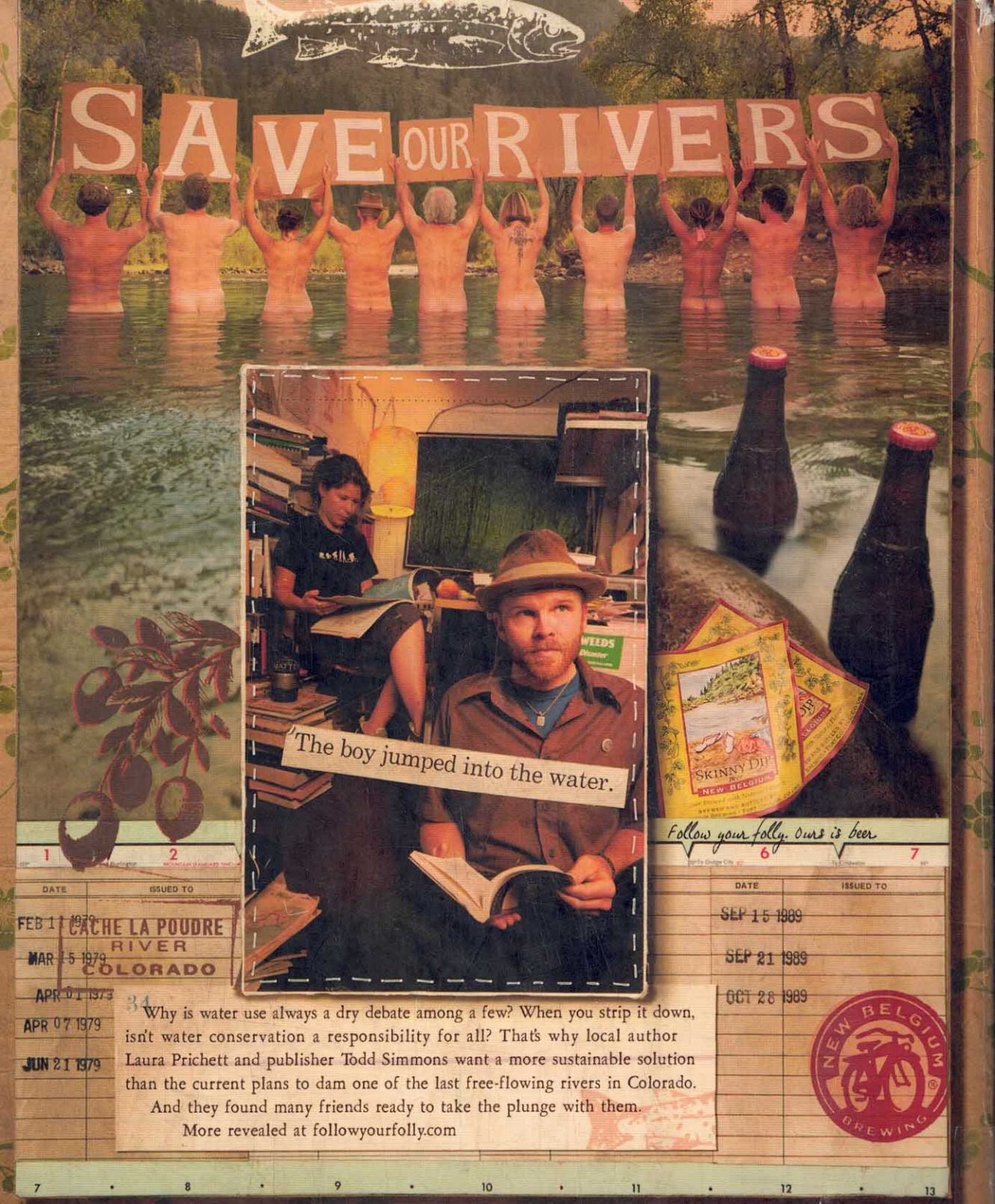
Kyle McCutchen has been paddling since 1993, the year he began kayaking with his father. Sharing the Wave Sport Excel with the Velcro hip pads was too much, and it wasn't long before the two of them had their own gear, and were exploring and learning together near their hometown of Grand Junction, Colorado. He hasn't dropped the paddle since, though he's lost it a number of times in his exploration of the Southern Rockies. A handful of amazing instructors pushed Kyle's development at an early age. Chris Brindisi critiqued his forward stroke before he could write. Troy Baleria endured constant pestering for a ride when Kyle was too young to drive, and was kind enough to give-in, as was Pete Atkinson. Erica Mitchell taught Kyle how to cartwheel, and the stroke work she preached as necessary for a freestyle basis drastically improved Kyle's comfort on the water. She later introduced him to the late '90s freestyle scene where he learned even more as he continued to compete into early college. Barry Chamberlain and Donnie Smith are the largest cause of his current obsession with creek boating, dragging him down Escalante Creek at a young age. It was with Donnie that he perfected his street knowledge of modern creek boating technique. Kyle graduated in May of 2005 with a Bachelors of Science Degree in Business Marketing from Johnson & Wales University. He currently lives in Denver, Colorado with his girlfriend, Tina Swan, and his daughter, Sydney River McCutchen.

Thank you Mom and Dad. You allowed and encouraged me to explore the rivers and the world. Thank you Tina. With out your support this project, and much of what I've accomplished in the last few years, wouldn't have been possible. Thank you Sydney. You brighten my life.

Tick Lists

Completely biased, ever-changing, no-particular-order word association lists. If one of these titles gets mentioned in a bar with a bunch of boaters, these are some of the place names that you might hear about in that same conversation. Or maybe you thought the _____ section was the greatest thing in the world and you want to do another river trip like it. Check off what you've experienced, actively seek to get other checkmarks that you want, and ignore the rest. Have fun and don't take this too seriously.

	River Games		Afterwork Gnar		Best Runs to Lap		Hike-Ins
☐	Horse Shoes	☐	USB	☐	NF Crystal	☐	West Fork San Juan
☐	Bocce	☐	Lake Creek	☐	OBJ	☐	Popo Agie
☐	Badmitton	☐	Vallecito	☐	Narrows	☐	South Mineral Creek
☐	Volleyball	☐	Pandoras	☐	South Mineral Creek	☐	Cascade Creek
☐	Tug Buckets	☐	Gore (solo)	☐	Eldo	☐	Mad Creek
	Illegal Runs		Race Runs		Expedition Test Pieces		Freestyle
☐	M-Wave	☐	OBJ	☐	The Box	☐	Fluffy Muffin
☐	Pandora's Box	☐	Gore	☐	Rio Brazos	☐	M-Wave
☐	BLC	☐	Homestake	☐	Black Canyon	☐	South Canyon
☐	Upper Upper Salt	☐	Fish Creek	☐	BLC	☐	Lawson Hole
☐	Fall Creek	☐	Upper Animas	☐	Hellsgate	☐	Taco/Burrito
	Runs that Suck		Boater Towns		Manmade Play Parks		Quintessential Class IV
☐	Middle Ruby Fork	☐	BV	☐	Green River, WY	☐	Numbers
☐	Hermosa Creek	☐	Salida	☐	Vail	☐	Straight Canyon
☐	Confluence	☐	Steamboat	☐	Salida	☐	Stevens Down
☐	Needle Creek, WY	☐	Durango	☐	Lyons	☐	Slaughterhouse
☐	Little Dolores Creek	☐	Jackson	☐	Riverdale	☐	Shoshone River, WY
	Raft Multi-Days		Scenic Day Adventure		Beginner Destinations		Marathon Sections
☐	Grand Canyon	☐	Teton River	☐	Jackson Hole	☐	Dumont to Golden
☐	Cataract	☐	Bailey	☐	Ark Valley	☐	Salida to Canon City
☐	The Salt	☐	Encampment	☐	Pagosa Springs	☐	Homestake to Eagle
☐	Gates of Lodore	☐	Upper Animas	☐	Telluride	☐	Upper Provo River
☐	San Juan	☐	Clarks Fork (Day to H)	☐	San Rafael Swell	☐	NF Fish to Steamboat
	Most Likely Places to Swim		Small Craft Overnighters		Best Waterfalls to Practice your Boof		Weekend Kegger Float Trip
☐	Gore	☐	Black Boxes	☐	NF Crystal, #4	☐	Loma/Westwater
☐	Big South	☐	Escalante River	☐	WFCC, Coors Falls	☐	White River
☐	Waterton	☐	Muddy Creek	☐	Narrows , White Line	☐	Upper Colorado River
☐	Treasure Canyon	☐	Zion Narrows	☐	Lake Creek, The Brain	☐	Cisco to Moab
☐	Crystal Gorge	☐	Gila River	☐	OBJ, Say Cheese	☐	Dolores
	Hike-Outs		Classic All-Day Creeks		Getting the Booties Wet		Shuttles from Hell
☐	Upper Taos Box	☐	Big South	☐	Foxton Gardens	☐	Brazos
☐	Rockwood	☐	Cimarron	☐	Plateau Creek	☐	Gates of Lodore
☐	2nd Gorge Lime	☐	Popo Agie	☐	Taylor Canyon	☐	Crystal River Forks
☐	Teton River	☐	Aqua Fria	☐	Pilar	☐	Upper SF White
☐	Waterton	☐	NSV	☐	Gros Ventre River	☐	Los Pinos
	Class V Pit Stop		Freestyle Pit Stop		Combo Runs		
☐	Lower Cimmaron	☐	Green River, WY	☐	Quadruple Crown CB		
☐	South Fork Rio Grande	☐	Fluffy Muffin	☐	Cascade Creek-Canyon Creek-Rockwood Box		
☐	Upper Ruby Fork	☐	Shoshone	☐	Big South-Joe Wright-Spencer Heights		
☐	Uncompahgre QQ	☐	BV/Salida	☐	South Mineral-Ice Lakes-1st Gorge Lime		
☐	Wolf Creek	☐	South Canyon	☐	Willow Creek-Upper Elk River-Mad Creek		
	Great Canals		Low Volume Gorges		Pushy Expert Canyons		Tenuous Access
☐	Pueblo Park	☐	Christopher Creek	☐	Vallecito	☐	Cheesman Gorge
☐	M-Wave	☐	Lime Creek	☐	Prime Time, Big South	☐	Lake Fork Gunnison
☐	Lucky 7	☐	Inner Crystal Gorge	☐	Rockwood Box	☐	Elk River
☐	Sixth Water	☐	Upper East Fork	☐	Cross Mountain Gorge	☐	Cimarron
☐	Woods Creek	☐	Crandall Creek	☐	USB	☐	Big Cottonwood
☐	_____		Worth the Drive		Freestyle Options		Flooded Creek Style
☐	_____	☐	NF Payette, ID	☐	Alpine Canyon	☐	Escalante Creek
☐	_____	☐	Green River, NC	☐	Animas Town	☐	Cascade Creek
☐	_____	☐	Little White, WA	☐	Ark Valley	☐	Bailey
☐	_____	☐	Big Timber Creek, MT	☐	Cody	☐	Clear Creek Ark
☐	_____	☐	California State	☐	Greater Denver	☐	Embudo



Why is water use always a dry debate among a few? When you strip it down, isn't water conservation a responsibility for all? That's why local author Laura Prichett and publisher Todd Simmons want a more sustainable solution than the current plans to dam one of the last free-flowing rivers in Colorado.

And they found many friends ready to take the plunge with them.

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